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ALBANIAN WONDER TALES

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to
PRINCE ESSAD KRYEZIU

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FOREWORD

The Albanian Përrállë

THE ten tales which make up this volume—an inconsiderable portion of the mass of fragmentary folklore known as *Përrállë*, which has from earliest times been associated with the Albanian stock, the common possession of what is in all probability the oldest Aryan people in Europe—have been selected for their representative qualities and wide circulation.

The texture woven of the Eagle-Men's ancient folk fictions of which they are typical is a tapestry of extraordinary richness and beauty, as unfamiliar to the student of other European systems as it is characteristic. Their *mise-en-scène* is a wonderland weird and unforgettable, peopled not at all by the beneficent "fairy" or the mischievous pixie or flibbertigibbet of more northern story, but by giants, dwarfs, and witches as wild as the vast congeries of mountains and ravines which is the present-day Albanian kingdom, by talking animals and trees, flying men, half-human birds, and horrendous monsters that form a category distinctly its own.

There is no doubt that these *fablieux* are the persisting remnants of a myth mass enormously older than are the tales themselves. The presence in the more venerable fragments of the Mansion of the Sun and the latter's Three Sisters, wooed in turn by the earthly Prince (the Spring), is clear evidence of cosmogonic character. But in the march of the centuries few such landmarks remain; the rest has been submerged by the invading floods of other cultures, leaving only a tangle of gorgeous wonder tales to enthrall the child and intrigue the student of origins.

While from the days of the brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen the folklores of northern Europe have received earnest comparative study, that of the Albanians has had, up to a handful of years ago, few collectors and scarcely more than superficial examination, while the general reader has assumed its tales to be in larger part adaptations of the inventions of other surrounding stocks. Such an assumption is curiously regardless of the facts of history.

Probably no people in Europe, during more than two thousand years of racial vicissitudes, has preserved a larger share of its heritage than the Albanians. And it is not to be believed that the extraordinary tenacity which has kept alive the race's own

language, social forms, and customs, and the body of its common law since before the beginning of written records, could have disregarded its legend,—that repository of its religious beliefs, its conception of the physical universe and of the individual's duties to his fellow and to the spiritual world by which it felt itself to be surrounded.

The tale mass of the Albanians has in process of time come naturally to reflect many foreign elements. Persian, Greek, Roman, Mongol, Serb—each separate wave of conquest which flooded the land to the mountains, when it ebbed left behind it its peculiar flotsam and jetsam of legend. But this to the folklorist is readily distinguishable.

Under the impact of the Christian and Mahometan faiths, too, the ancient tales have sometimes taken on new colors. The Guardian *Óra*, for example ("The Boy Who Played the Bousouka"), the Guardian Spirit who can foresee and foretell the future, is individualized in one tale as the Guardian Angel ("The Man Who Went to Find His Angel"). There is also the *Shtoyzavállé* ("The Princess Who Had the Silver Tooth"), the primeval air spirits invisibly haunting fields and forests, mountains, and the upper air: Christian tradition counts them the angels who, in the war between

God and the rebellious Lucifer, doubtful of the outcome, remained neutral and aloof, and hence, though not condemned to Hell, cannot re-enter Paradise.

But these have retained much of their pre-Christian semblance. They can take on human form and are both male and female. The *Shtoyzavállé*'s tear, falling on a human being, causes the disease known as *píka* [the drop], fatal apoplexy or sun-stroke. The female is as a rule beneficent, giving her milk to lost children and good counsel to folk in dreams. Holy men sometimes marry them. The male, however, is less friendly, punishing the unwitting intruder with lameness or blindness. One should avoid travelling the mountain trails at noon, when the *Shtoyzavállé* are most apt to be at their merrymakings. Some of the males are thieves and mischief-makers; their blood is black—if a man paints his body with it no weapon will wound him. Rarely the most vicious invade a human dwelling: this is the Albanian *poltergeist*.

By a comparison of variants one can readily distinguish the process of foreign assimilation. Some, current in southern Albania, show borrowings from the Greece of Aristotle. But as one follows them northward and deeper into the mountains, these distinctively Greek features fade out and the primeval

earmarks emerge. The Albanian *Míra* ("The Boy Who Was Fated to Be a King"), in themselves specialized forms of the *Óra*, above referred to, become in the south the *Fáti* [*Fatíya*], another name for these being *Ethëna* [the Said or Destiny], identifiable with the Greek *Parke*, and not only foresee but control the future. But as the legends travel from Attica northward through Epirus, the *Míra* become less and less the Fates and more and more the mere Familiars, slipping back to their primitive form.

In High Albania every man has his *Órë*—lucky or unlucky in accordance with his character—which dies with him. It is white-faced [*fágë-bárdha*] or black-faced [*fágë-zézë*] as he is good or bad. Hence the common curse, "May you have the black cheek!" and the blessing, "May the white cheek come to you!" It is the fulfiller of desires, the requiter, the bringer of good luck to the righteous and of misfortune to the wicked. So the beggar blesses the almsgiver with a "May thy *Órë* give thee good fortune!" or "May the *Óra* see this!" The female *Óra* fall in love with and even marry human husbands, the offspring of such unions not uncommonly possessing certain occult powers such as clairvoyance and telepathy.

When we trace the Greek *Parke* back through a

like development, from general to particular function, we are approaching a far older lore from which both stocks drew alike, as the Japanese pantheon before the Christian Era was to draw from the South Seas, and the mythology of Russian Christendom in the sixth century was to absorb from the heathen *epos* of the Slavonians. Some of the Albanian tales have ancestries so ancient that they classify with the so-called "Universals." I have encountered in China a version of what is perhaps the most remarkable story in this collection ("The Boy Who Took the Letter to the Land Where the Dead Live") that is centuries older than the Great Wall, with whose legendary builder the Chinese modernly associate it.

Of the monsters inimical to man which crowd these tales—in origin personifications of the unfriendly forces of nature, storm, earthquake, and avalanche, and the terrors of lonely gorge and beast-ridden forest—the great ruler is the *Kuchedra* ("The Boy Who Was Brother to the Dragúe") whose forms are legion. It is by nature reptilian, its rôle being played in oriental and most European folklores by the dragon.

It begins life as the *Shliga*, a small blindworm haunting dark caves or fissures in the ground. If it

lives for fifty years without being seen by a human being it becomes a *Búllar*, after a hundred years an *Ershaj*, and after two centuries the dreaded and colossal *Kuchedra*, which preëmpts springs and watercourses, holds kings and cities in fee, and can drink the sea. In this guise it is the chief actor in the Albanian variant of the Perseus and Andromeda legend, embalmed in well-nigh every myth *epos* of the world.

In its lesser form it is the *Lubiya* ("The Boy Who Was Fated to Be a King"), the obscene haunter of the forest, and the grisly opponent of the Brave Prince in his quest to free the imprisoned or ensorcelled Beautiful-of-the-Earth.

The *Kuchedra*'s great antagonist is the *Dragúe* ("The Boy Who Was Brother to the *Dragúe*"), the man born with tiny wings in his armpits, who from the age of twelve has the power of levitation and whose supernatural attributes, until he dies, are known "only to God and his mother." In the region of Chelza it is said that the *Dragúe* can be born only of forefathers who through three generations have not been unfaithful to their wives. In the older tales the animal kind have also their *Dragúe*, so that the dog unbeknown to his master, the wolf, the bear, or the eagle, may be one.

Next to the *Kuchedra* in the descending scale is the *Mämädręqja* ("The Boy Who Was Brother to the Dragúe"), the Devil-Mother, the Old-Woman-of-the-Wood and Grandmother of the Witches. Curiously, in some sections of the country, the mother of the *Dragúe* is so called. She is ordinarily seen as the forest guardian of the Beautiful-of-the-Earth and a mistress of evil magic.

Her lesser form is the *Shtriga* ("The Girl Who Took a Snake for Husband") who normally lives in the Underworld, that fascinating empiry whose sky is green, its trees black, and its sun red. The name in some localities is applied to a more horrible creation of peasant fancy—the vampire-woman that sucks the blood of children and bewitches her neighbor, who, unless hair from his head and armpit is burned with the proper incantation, is doomed to shrivel and die. This conception, however, shows no signs of great antiquity, and is doubtless a descendant of the more modern vampire, an article of faith in the Balkan peninsula throughout the Middle Ages.

Also a habitant of the Underworld is the *Dif* ("The Boy Who Killed the Dif"), the Giant of these tales. The Albanian word is *Gjigándi* or *Gógol*, but the Turkish word *Dif* is more frequently employed. He is not the castled Brobdingnagian of

other European lores, but a cannibal Polyphemus, naked and hirsute and covered with lice as big as grasshoppers, a gormand who climbs to the upper or white world by means of hidden wells to ravage orchards and steal away lovely damsels.

His lesser form is the *Kátallan*, whose name is an echo of the Catalonian company formed in 1305 by the Emperor Andronicus at Constantinople, which slaughtered the Turks in Thrace and Thessaly, and whose descendants were the Adriatic pirates of the fifteenth century.

The *Thopch* ("The Boy Who Took the Letter to the World Where the Dead Live"), the Dwarf, is a lesser character whose home is either the Underworld or the tops of high mountains, and who is not as a rule unfriendly to human beings. He is sometimes called *Herr*.

The Beautiful-of-the-Earth is the Albanian counterpart of the "Sleeping Beauty" who decorates so many folklores,—the desired of all desirers. She has many aspects. Her difficult abode is in the mountains or secluded forest, or in the Underworld, where she is held in durance by *Dif* or *Mämädréqja*, guarded by enchantment and supernatural beasts, which the Prince-Rescuer must overcome.

The versions relating her misfortunes and adven-

tures are a treasure trove for students of vulgar customs and superstitions. If, for example, the Prince finds her asleep, he must throw in her ear a bit of earth from a grave, so that she will not awaken before he has freed her from her enchantment. Thus the country robber nowadays throws a grave clod on the roof of the house he purposed to rob, so that those it shelters will not wake.

She is invariably all-beautiful, often all-wise, the goal of manly ambition, symbol of good-fortune and happiness in love.

One can assume that these tales passed through the inevitable process of dislocation till they reached the kaleidoscopic form in which they now present themselves. The great number of their variants show their episodes combined in a thousand ways. The *deus ex machina* may be in one variant the all-wise Beautiful-of-the-Earth, and in another the magic jewel that overcomes all sorcery. The evil Witch-protagonist of one may in another become the Giant or one of the terrible reptilian visitants that haunt the primeval background. The modern tale-teller need be guided by no precedent, and is at liberty to combine the various stock episodes in any pattern that pleases him.

In my own versions I have tried to retain so far as

possible the most popular structure, reconciling contradictory detail only in the interest of coherency, and without recourse to the extravagant illogic on which the modern raconteur is too apt to call to escape the *impasse*.

I am indebted especially to the works of August Dozon (*Contes Albanais*), Johann von Hahn (*Albanesische Studien*), Maximilian Lambertz (*Albanische Märchen*), Holger Pedersen (*Zur Albanesischen Volkskunde*), and Thimi Mitkos (*Bleta Shqypëtare*). I owe gratitude also to Mr. Stavro Frasher of Cavajë whose volume, *Përmës Mirditës ne Dimër* (Through Mirdita in Winter), is known to all Albanian students, and to Miss Meverette R. Smith of the American Girls' School at Cavajë, whose students furnished me with a sheaf of versions as told in their own homes throughout Albania.

Denied a nationality for so many centuries, the Albanians have no national written literature; what for other peoples has been crystallized in the written word has with them found preservation only in the retentive memory of the old. This residuum comprises far more than the ubiquitous *përrälle* or folktale: it holds animal fables, dirges, and *epithalamia*, aphorisms, love lyrics, occupational refrain songs,

martial chants—a vast mass of material that bears the earmarks of an enormous antiquity, and that has been handed down, “mouth to ear” as the phrase has it, since the remote childhood of the race.

Fortunately, present-day Albania has a growing number of scholars who are setting themselves to a serious study of these fragments, that are of such inestimable value to the race’s history. And under the kingdom’s enlightened ruler, the first of the line of Zog, whose efforts are so unfailing to express the Albanian soul to a world to which the Land-of-the-Eagle is becoming increasingly familiar, these beginnings should result in a consistent labor that shall, happily, rediscover for future ages a buried treasure that without it must be irretrievably lost.

POST WHEELER.

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THE MAN WHO WENT TO FIND HIS ANGEL



THE MAN WHO WENT TO FIND HIS ANGEL

IN AN ANCIENT TIME, when animals spoke the speech of men, and even the trees talked together, there was a Toshk, of the South, who lived in a mountain village in the house in which his great-grandfather had been born before him. He had a wife and two children, a cow, a donkey, five goats, and an olive tree that bore each year seven basketfuls of olives, yet he was not content. When the sun shone, it was too hot; when the clouds hung in the sky it was too cold; when it rained it was too wet; when it did

not rain it was too dry. In short, he was seven times harder to please than a mother-in-law with the lumbago. Moreover, he was lazy as a tortoise, so that people called him "Half-a-Crop" and spat on the ground when his name was mentioned. As for his wife, he led her a life that would make a stone image weep salt tears, and beat her whenever he stubbed his toe.

One day he said to her, "I am tired of this existence, in which evil luck has always pursued me. Here am I, living like a gypsy's cur dog, with only a few coppers in my pocket, when by right I should be a Bey and a rich man, owning hills and valleys and having folk bow to me and make me gifts."

Asked she, "By what right shouldst thou be a Bey?"

He answered, "Because of my greater intelligence and understanding. It is my fate that ties me down."

"If it is thy fate to be what thou art," said she, "there is nothing to be done about it. If thou wouldst cease snivelling and work like other men, perhaps that fate would be a better one."

Said he, "Thou art insolent, and wouldst be better for a beating, but whenever I give thee one I get only hard words from the neighbors. As for me, my mind is made up. I shall have my fate changed."

“How wilt thou do that?” she asked.

He replied, “Is it not said that every man has his Angel, appointed to watch over him and guide him? Mine is surely neglectful of his duty, else he would have led me to better fortune. I shall go and look for him, and when I find him I shall demand of him better service and my just deserts.”

At that she laughed, saying, “A good trail to thee!” But when she saw him lacing new thongs in his shoes and putting all the food from the cupboard into his back-pack she was frightened. “Surely,” she exclaimed, “thou wert but joking. Thou canst not really intend such a never-heard-of thing.”

Said he, “I tell thee I am off to search out my Angel, as I should have done long ago. And I shall not come back till I have found him.”

Cried she, “Whilst thou art gone, what is to become of me and our children?”

“That is no concern of mine,” he answered. “Thou, no doubt, hast thine Angel, too, and he should bestir himself. It is his business, not mine.” And he put his pack on his back and took his stick and set out on the road, leaving her weeping, with the children clinging to her girdle.

He trudged two days, he trudged three days, demanding of all he met if they had seen his Angel, at

which some laughed and others tapped their foreheads, while the women he asked ran from him and hid themselves in the bushes, so that he was in an evil humor, saying to himself, "Who would have believed folk could be so ignorant?"

On the fourth morning he overtook a Dervish in a white robe and green turban, of whom he asked his question.

Said the Dervish, "This is a strange thing thou askest me. If indeed an Angel may be seen, how should I know thy particular Angel?"

"Why," the Toshk answered, "my Angel—in addition to having wings, as is common to them all—is my counterpart, bearing mine own face and look. Are we not so taught?"

"It is true," said the Dervish, "that the holy writings say something of the sort. But such sayings are for the learned, and their meaning is not to be understood without instruction. Many wise men hold that an angel has the power to take any shape he may desire. Moreover, hast thou never heard that a man's Angel appears to him only once in his true form—when, having found him utterly worthless and fit only for destruction, he takes his final leave of him? Wish not therefore to see thine!"

The other rejoined, "That is a tale told to keep

those down who are down already, but I have not so poor a spirit. If an Angel is appointed to me, why should he not show himself when my need is urgent? Nay, but I am determined to find him."

"What is thy need?" asked the Dervish.

"My fate," answered the Toshk, "does not suit me. I would demand of him a better one."

Said the Dervish, then, "A man's fate is what he himself makes it. I advise thee to return to thy home and family and perform the duties thy condition of life lays upon thee."

But said the man, "Not I!"

"Well," the Dervish said, "as thou wilt, then. Since we are on the same trail, let us walk together and we can converse as we go." So the man shifted his pack to the other shoulder and they went on in company.

Now the way led through a forest, and presently they came to a great tree which leaned above it. The tree was moaning and groaning so that all its leaves shook, and the Dervish asked it, "O Tree, why dost thou complain?" The Tree answered, "In the bark of my side there is a rift and recently something has grown within it which prevents my sap from flowing freely. I pray you, travelers, to look in it and take away the thing that causes me pain."

The Dervish said to his companion, "What sayest thou? Shall we not do so?"

But the Toshk replied, "Nay, I have no time to waste. My business is too important." So they went on together without pausing.

They had gone but a league farther when the Dervish stopped and smote his hands together. "As to the tree," said he, "I remember now that there was a certain sweetish smell about it. What if there was a store of wild honey in the rift of which it complained? If so we could sell it in the nearest village for a goodly sum."

Answered the Toshk, "It seems to me also that I noted a sweetness in the air while it spoke to us. It could be nothing else but honey, as thou sayest. Let us hasten back and get it."

So they turned back, but when they came to the tree, lo, a peasant was working at the rift with a shovel, loading into his cart the last of a vast quantity of honey that his donkey could scarce pull, and thanking Heaven for his good luck.

"Alas!" said the Dervish. "If we had but helped the poor tree we, instead of the peasant, would have had the profit. Now we have had only the extra walk."

"Did I not tell thee," the Toshk replied, "that I

am pursued by ill fortune? However I toil, it always happens in this way to me."

They went on, then, over the way they had already twice traveled, and in the afternoon, crossing the mountain, came to a ravine, wherein the Dervish stopped. Said he, "Dost thou not hear a murmur as of far-off voices?"

The other listened. "Aye," he said.

The Dervish gazed about him, and said he, "Look yonder." The Toshk looked where the Dervish pointed; and beheld a great company of ants swarming in a nook between two rounded rocks. Said the Dervish, "It is the ants speaking to us."

So both knelt down and inclined their ears, when the ants said, "O benevolent travelers! We build our new city beneath this spot, and our tunnel has encountered a great mass of yellow stones. Since we cannot go around them, we pray you lend us your aid to remove them, that our work may continue."

Said the Dervish to his companion, "Heaven's blessing is on those who show kindness to all God's creatures. Thou hast a stout stick in thy hand. Thrust it into the ground and let us take the yellow stones from the ants' way."

But the Toshk answered, "What! Shall I waste an hour delving in the dirt for the benefit of insects? I

have a greater matter on my mind." And he rose up and went on, the Dervish with him.

They had gone a league farther when the Toshk clapped a hand to his girdle, and said he, "My knife is gone! It must be that it fell when I kneeled to listen to those ridiculous ants. There is nothing for me now but to go back and find it."

"Well," said the Dervish, "that is not so great a misfortune. As I find thy conversation pleasant and have nothing to hurry me, I will walk with thee."

So they went back to the ravine, but when they got there, lo, between the two rounded rocks they beheld three shepherds digging furiously with sharpened sticks, and beside the hole they had made lay a pile of gold ducats as big as a barrel.

Asked the Dervish of one of them, "What is all this gold?"

The shepherd replied, "As we came along the trail an hour ago we sat down here to eat our bread, and the ants besought us to move some stones that lay in the way of their tunnel. We did so, when we found this gold, which is no doubt an old robbers' hoard, and we three are henceforth as wealthy as kings."

Exclaimed the Dervish to his comrade, "Why, these are the yellow stones that the ants complained of! May my life be shortened if I did not say to thee,

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“Take thy stick and let us aid them!” Had we done so we had this moment been rich instead of these shepherds.”

“Was it not my fate not to do so?” cried the Toshk. “Art thou now convinced that I lied not to thee when I said that ill fortune clings to me wherever I turn my toes? I will wager thee they have not even found my knife!” And he asked them.

“Nay,” the shepherds answered, “we have seen no knife.”

Said he to the Dervish, “What did I tell thee!” And he turned again to the trail, cursing as he went, while the Dervish went with him in silence.

In the evening, on the farther side of the mountain, they came to a wide valley through which ran a river, and as they went along its bank, seeking a ferryman to put them across in his boat, a huge fish thrust up its head from the water, and said he, “O sirs! Take pity on my distress and aid me.”

The Dervish asked it, “What is thy trouble?”

Said the fish, “A month ago as I swam, I saw a bright pebble on the sand of the bottom and downed it. But it has given me such anguish in my inwards that though I drink from morning to night I cannot quench my burning thirst.”

“How may we help thee?” asked the Dervish.

The fish answered, "In the meadow yonder grows here and there a plant with a yellow blossom. I pray you, pluck me a handful of the blossoms that I may swallow them. For they will cause me to vomit up the pebble."

Then the Dervish said to his companion, "Why should we not help the poor creature? Let us search for some of the yellow flowers."

But the other replied, "Let it get rid of the stone as best it can! We did not bid it swallow it. I have my own affairs to attend to." And he turned his back on the fish and went on, the Dervish with him.

Presently they came upon a ferryman who set them across the river. On its farther side was an inn, and as the sun was now low they entered it and passed the night there. Next morning, as they were paying their score, the boatman of the evening before came in, and he said to them, "Glory to the feet that carry you! And may you find all good at the end of your trail! For ye brought me the luckiest of good luck last night!"

Asked the Dervish, "How may that be?"

He answered, "All my life I have lived in poverty, and of late living has been so hard that yesterday I said to myself, 'If I get no passenger before nightfall I will drown myself.' And I took oath upon the Great

Mountain Tomóri. But just as I was ready to throw myself into the water, you came, and your two coins gave me heart. I was tying my boat at my own side of the river, when a great fish besought me to pluck for it some blossoms of a certain herb which grew



thereabout, that it might rid itself of a stone it had swallowed. Pitying its distress I took a torch from my hut and found the plants and fed the creature a handful of the blossoms, and when it had swallowed them it vomited forth the stone upon the bank. And behold, it was no less than a diamond, which cannot fail to make me the richest man in these parts." So say-

ing, he took the jewel from his girdle and showed it to them.

It was of such luster that the inn was as bright as day, and when he saw it the Dervish held up his hands in astonishment. Cried he to his companion, "Would we had showed charity for the fish when it appealed to us first! Our hardness of heart has lost us another fortune!"

But the Toshk rose up with his face turned as green as young grass. "May the devil blacken thy forehead!" he shouted at the ferryman, and seizing upon his back-pack, he took the trail, raging at the new blow his fate had dealt him. And the Dervish went with him.

They met no more travelers on the way, for it lay through a region rocky and treeless, without habitations, and at length the Dervish said, "I pray thee, reflect upon the chances and mischances of our journey together, for experience is Heaven's gift to man that he may learn thereby. Do they not show us that recompense is given to the virtuous? Had we pitied the tree, we would have gained the honey. If we had helped the ants, the gold would have been ours. Our aid to the fish would have won us the jewel. But we hardened our hearts, and these rewards went to others who were deserving. Let us take a lesson from

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this and mend our ways in future, so that the blessings that fall on the virtuous shall be ours."

But cried the other, "Get thee gone with thy pratting! I begin to think that thou art a part of my evil fate, and I want no more of thee!"

"Well," said the Dervish, "if that is thy wish, we shall part at the next crossroads. But let us at least not part in enmity. And maybe we shall meet again."

Now as he spoke, lo, a huge wolf rose up before them on the lonely trail. Growled he, "O travelers, I pray you, give me your counsel."

Asked the Dervish, "What is thy difficulty?"

Said the wolf, "Though I feed continually on the flesh of all beasts and birds, I go always empty. Tell me what food I must devour to appease the hunger that gnaweth me without ceasing."

Cried the Toshk, "Get thee gone, filthy brute! What is thy hunger to us?"

But when he said this, lo, the Dervish suddenly swelled in stature till he was as tall as a tree. Wings sprouted from his shoulders, his turban became a circlet of brightness like the lightning, and at the look on his face the man shrank from him in terror.

Said he, "It is I, O Toshk, that am thine Angel! Thou hast met me in many forms, and now I bid thee farewell. The fate that thou thyself hast made is

upon thee!" Then said he to the wolf, "The food that will appease thy hunger is the flesh of a man."

And with the words he vanished.

This tale was told me by a man of Tinglimajmun, where the monkeys dance. Take it with you, and may we all have health!

THE BOY WHO KILLED THE DIF



THE BOY WHO KILLED THE DIF

ONCE and once there was—you may take my word for it!—a King of a land beyond the highest mountains, who had three sons. The eldest was named Rexh, the middle one was named Palok, and the youngest, who was as strong as the rocks and worth both of the others put together, was named Gjuro.

The King had near his palace a great orchard sur-

rounded by a high wall, and in the middle of it was a quince tree, which was his especial pride and which bore each year three quinces. Always, however, they were hardly ripe before they disappeared from the tree, and the royal guards reported that a Dif, coming from nowhere, three nights in succession leaped the orchard's wall and plucking one of the quinces, made off with it.

Now the Difs are giants four yards tall, eaters of human flesh, which live on high mountains or in the Underworld—whence they come forth into the white world through hidden wells in the forests—and the King knew not how to save his precious quinces, for his guardsmen, so soon as they heard the Dif's roar, ran away as fast as thrown spears.

One summer day, when the fruit was ripening on the trees, Rexh, his eldest son, heard him complaining, "Alas, for my sweet quinces! What can I do against the Dif?" and said to him, "O my father! I will watch each night in thy orchard and guard the tree for thee. And if the Dif shows himself I shall kill him!"

Said the King, "Nay, my son. Thou hast true courage, but how canst thou do what all my guardsmen cannot?"

He replied, "I am a King's son, and have come to

man's stature!" And that night he took his bow and steel-tipped arrows to the orchard and hid himself in a clump of pomegranate shrubs to watch. He watched thus one night, he watched two nights, and on the third night, just at midnight, there came a roar like an angry wild boar's, at which the guardsmen outside the wall fled as if wolves were after them, and over it leaped the monstrous Dif. He was naked and hideous, with ten curved tusks in his mouth that gleamed in the moonlight, and when the Prince beheld him he trembled so that the bow fell from his hand and the pomegranate leaves rustled all about him.

The Dif galloped to the quince tree, plucked one of the quinces, and leaping over the wall again, disappeared, roaring, in the forest. And in shame Rexh broke his bow in pieces and returning to the palace, said to his father next morning, "The Dif came and stole one of thy quinces, but such fear seized me that I could do nothing."

Said the King, "Blame not thyself, my son. After all, thou wert as courageous as my guardsmen."

When the other two brothers learned what had happened, Palok the elder went to the King and said, "O my father! I shall take thy iron battle mace and watch in thy orchard. If the Dif comes a second time thou shalt see what I shall do to him."

“Nay, my son,” the King answered. “Thou art brave, but how canst thou do what thy elder brother cannot?”

But Palok took the iron mace, and that night went to the orchard and climbed to the top of an apple tree to watch. And at midnight there came the dreadful roar, the guardsmen fled as before, and over the wall leaped the Dif. At sight of him the Prince felt his blood turn to water, nevertheless he threw the mace with so true an aim that it smote the Dif on the head. It bounded from it, however, like a pebble from a boulder, and he roared, “Ho! A rotten plum has fallen!” and plucking a second quince, leaped the wall and made off into the forest. And in shame Palok returned to the palace and next morning said to his father, “The Dif came and stole another of thy quinces, but though I threw thy mace and struck him, my strength was too little.”

Said the King, “Blame not thyself, my son. After all, thou wert more courageous than thy elder brother!”

Lastly, when he heard, Gjuro the youngest went to the King and said, “O my father! It is now my turn to face the Dif. Only give to me the weapon I shall choose, with thy blessing, and let me try.”

“Nay, my son,” replied the King. “Thou art bold,

but how canst thou succeed where both thy elder brothers have failed?"

Said Gjuro, "Give me thy magic sword from thy armory."

Now this sword would fight of itself, when its hilt was grasped, and it weighed as much as a weaver's beam. Said the King, "Thou knowest not what thou askest. No man in my whole realm has sufficient strength to hold my magic sword."

But said Gjuro, "Let me at least try. For my strength has never yet been tested."

So at his pleading the King had the sword brought, and Gjuro took it to the meadow to practise with it. The instant he drew it from its scabbard it began to leap and whirl like a stallion, dragging him hither and thither, now whistling through the air and now gouging the earth like a plow drawn by eight bullocks, till he had no more breath in him than a crushed frog and was forced to let go the hilt, when it fell to the ground and lay motionless.

After he had rested awhile, he seized it again, and it dragged him bodily into the air, and dashed him down so that with the shock he let go his hold, when again it fell to the ground and lay motionless.

But after he had rested once more, he grasped it for a third time, struggling with it with all his power,

and so he continued, now resting and now resuming, till late afternoon, when he had grown so strong that, whirl as it would, his grip could not be loosened. Then he sheathed it and lay down and slept till the evening, when he took it to the orchard and sat down under the quince tree, with the sword across his knees.

At midnight he heard from the forest the dreadful roar, and the shouts of the guardsmen as they fled, and over the wall leaped the Dif, who, when he beheld him, rushed upon him yelling with delight, "Ho!" he screeched. "Here is not only my quince, but man's flesh to tickle my gullet!"

Cried Gjuro, "Thou shalt have neither one!" and drawing the sword from its scabbard, turned the blade toward him, when it began to whirl so fast that the Dif grew dizzy and drew back dismayed. And presently it lunged a lunge that would have transfixed an oak tree, and the point, leaping at him, cut off one of his ears, so that, howling with pain, he leaped the wall and fled to the forest.

Then Gjuro wiped the blood from the blade and sheathing the sword, returned to the palace and made report to his father. The King praised him for his courage, saying, "Thou hast done what no other man in my realm could accomplish. Now the Dif has been

worsted and will trouble us no more." But said Gjuro, "Nay, I shall not rest till I have killed him."

In the morning he said to his two brothers, "Let us seek out the creature and finish him." Accordingly all three, Rexh with his bow and arrows, Palok with the iron mace, and Gjuro with the magic sword, followed the Dif's bloody trail from the orchard to the forest. It led them to a cave, in whose depths they found a well so deep that one could not see the bottom. Said Gjuro, "Let us make us a rope by which we may descend into this well, for it will take us to the creature's lair."

Accordingly, they gathered vines and twisted them till they had a rope long enough to reach to the very bowels of the earth, and fastening its end to the well curb, let it down into the depths. Said Gjuro, then, "O Rexh, thou art the eldest of us, and it is thy right to lead."

But said Rexh, with his knees knocking together, "I bethink me that we are all like to be slain in this venture and our father will have none to reign after him. Since I am to inherit the rule it is my duty not to risk my life."

Then Gjuro said to Palok, the next eldest, "The right falls to thee."

But Palok answered, trembling, "Our brother

Rexh is not strong enough to hoist us up after we have slain the Dif. It will surely be wiser for me to remain here to help him."

Said Gjuro, "Very well, I shall go down alone, and do ye two remain here. When I reach the bottom I will shake the rope once, that ye may know that all is well. Leave not this place during seven days, and when ye see the rope shake twice, pull me up. If I give no signal during that time ye may be certain that the Dif has slain me."

Then he kissed them both and with his sword in his girdle began climbing down the well by the vine rope. He went one hour, he went two hours, and at length reached the bottom. He shook the rope once as a signal to his brothers, and felt about him till he found a winding passage through which he stumbled in the darkness till he emerged into the Underworld.

Now this was like the white world he had left, except that the sky was as green as grass, the sun was red as blood, and every growing thing was black as ink. But he saw no living thing except grasshoppers as big as hares.

He wandered about, finding no trace of the Dif, for three days, eating bushberries and drinking from the rills, till on the fourth day he came to two huge rams grazing, one white and one black. Thought he, "Rid-

ing is easier than walking," and going up to them, leaped upon the back of the black ram. But it instantly began running swifter than a waterfall—so fast that he laid hold on its ears lest he fall off and break all his bones—through valleys and over mountains, till it came to a house built of black stone, where it stopped, and bounding high in the air, threw him into a deep pit under its wall, whose sides sloped inward.

But that he was so strong he would have been killed by the fall. As it was he lay an hour senseless, and it was noon when he came to. The bottom of the pit was strewn with the white bones of men, and seeing himself in such plight he said to himself, "Alas, I have fallen into the hands of the Dif, and he will have my life. For here I cannot use my sword and he can spear me from above!" And he sat down, sorrowful.

Presently he thought, "I am a King's son and I will sing my death song and die like one!" So he lifted his voice in a song, and so sweet it was that all the leaves of the trees about the pit hung down to listen.

Now when he ceased a voice spoke high above him, saying, "What! Amongst the thousand men the Dif has devoured was there a hero so great that his very bones sing?"

At that he looked up and saw leaning from a win-

dow in the house a maiden as lovely as a dream. Said he, "I am no hero, but a living man. I pray thee, whosoever thou art, aid me to escape from this trap that I may do that for which I have come here."

Asked she, "For what purpose hast thou come?"

He replied, "To slay the Dif of whom thou speakest."

"If that is so," said she, "I will right gladly aid thee. I am one of three King's daughters whom he stole from the white world, and who have been his prisoners two years." Then she unbound her black hair and twisting it into a single strand, lowered it into the pit and he climbed upon it to the window and entered the house. There she set bread and wine before him, and when he had satisfied his hunger, he asked her where the Dif might be found.

She replied, "I pray thee seek no further, for hereabout all things are his servants and thou canst never overcome him. Rather take me with thee to the white world, and I will be thy slave as long as I live."

"Nay," said he, "I have sworn to kill him. But when I have done so I will take thee with me and thou shalt wed my eldest brother."

Said she, then, "Alas, I fear I shall never see thee more! But I will pray for thee. In yonder meadow

thou wilt find two rams grazing, one white and one black. The black one will carry thee to the house of my younger sister, where it will treat thee as its fellow has treated thee here. If thou canst win from that pit she will tell thee how to find the Dif."

So he bade her farewell and going to the meadow found the two rams. He leaped on the back of the black one, which instantly set off, running swifter than the wind, over hills and plains, till mid-afternoon, when it came to a second house, built of gray stone, where it bounded into the air and hurled him into a pit deeper than the first. And this time also only his great strength saved his life, and he lay two hours unable to lift his head. But at length he arose and seeing a window in the wall above, he took a skull from the heaps of white bones that littered the bottom of the pit and threw it through the window.

And lo, there leaned from it a maiden as lovely as the first, who exclaimed, "What! Can the bones even of the mightiest hero fly through the air of themselves?"

Said he, "Nay, I who speak to thee am no dead hero but a living man. Help me, I pray thee, to escape from this snare, that I may do what I have come to do."

She asked, "What is thy purpose?"

He answered, "I would kill the Dif who keeps thee his prisoner."

Said she, then, "If that is thine errand I will aid thee joyfully!" And she unbound her copper-colored hair and let it down to him and he climbed to her. She set food and drink before him and when he had refreshed himself, he said to her, "How may I find the Dif?"

"Think no more of that," cried she, "for no man can vanquish him. Rather take me with thee to the white world, where I will be thy willing servant forever."

He replied, "Nay, I have taken mine oath to kill him. But when he is dead, I will indeed take thee with me, and thou shalt marry my older brother."

"Alas!" she cried. "Then I fear thou art lost. Nevertheless, I will pray for thee. Beside yonder stream graze a white ram and a black ram. Mount the black one and it will bear thee to the Dif's palace, where my youngest sister nurses him. For he has recently been severely wounded by a hero in the white world. There the ram will fling thee into a pit ten times as deep as this from which thou canst escape only by a miracle, and when the Dif finds thee there he will spear thee like a wild boar and devour thee."

But he answered, "I shall have something to say

about that!" and bidding her farewell, he found the rams and leaped on the back of the black one, which instantly set off, galloping like the lightning, till at sunset it came to a third house, built of white marble.



But before it could throw him into the pit that lay beside it Gjuro snatched the magic sword from his girdle and smote it a blow that severed its head from its shoulders.

He entered the palace, and found himself in a room furnished in black, where on an iron stove food of all

kinds was cooking itself in iron pans, with joints of meat roasting on iron spits and soups bubbling in iron pots, without a cook to be seen.

He entered a second room, larger than the first, and found it furnished in silver, with silver chairs and divans and curtains of silver brocade, but no human being could he see there.

He entered a third room, larger than both the others, and it was furnished entirely in gold. There, in a golden cradle with curtains embroidered in gold, lay the Dif, asleep and snoring so that the walls rattled. And rocking the cradle was a Beautiful-of-the-Earth with golden hair, so lovely that no tale-teller could describe her, and when he beheld her Gjuro fell as deep as the deepest sea in love with her.

When she saw him, with the leaping sword in his hand, she cried out in fright, but he said to her, "Fear not. I have come to slay the foul creature thou dost tend."

Now at his voice the Dif woke, and lifting his dreadful head, cried, "What! A man here?" And he sprang from the golden cradle, howling, and threw himself upon Gjuro.

But Gjuro said to the sword, "Do thy work!" and it whirled faster than the eye could follow, so that the Dif ran before it. In vain he seized the cradle and

hurled it—the blade sliced it in two as a knife cuts a melon. He ran hither and thither like a snake amid burning bushes, but at last he could go no farther, and it thrust him through, when he burst like a bladder.

Gjuro burned the fragments of his body in the iron stove, and he and the Beautiful-of-the-Earth feasted together. In the morning he set fire to the house, and when nothing remained of it but ashes and tumbled blocks of marble, he said to her, "We go now to the white world, where, if thou wilt, thou shalt be my wife. What sayest thou?"

She replied, "Willingly will I marry thee, for I fell in love with thee with the first sight of mine eyes. Let us take one of the Dif's white rams, which will carry us in three days to the Moving Mountains, through which we may pass."

Said he, "Nay, we must go back the way I came, for we take with us thy two sisters, who shall wed my two elder brothers. Dost thou know the trail to their houses?"

She answered, "Yes." So they set out together. Whether they went a short way or a long way, they arrived at length at the house of gray stone, where her sister of the copper-colored hair welcomed them joyfully. They rested there one night and with her went on next morning to the house of black stone, where

her sister of the black hair greeted them with tears of gladness. They rested there one night and next day all four followed the backward path to the tunnel, and so came at last to the bottom of the deep well where hung the rope of twisted vines.

It was now the seventh day, till which time Gjuro had bidden his two craven brothers, Rexh and Palok, to wait for him at the well's opening in the forest above. Aware that Gjuro well knew their cowardice, they had been ashamed to look one another in the face, and had waited, sullen and sulking. At the end of the first day Rexh had scoffed to Palok, "If he kills the Dif our younger brother will think there is no other such a hero in the realm!"

At the end of the second day Palok had sneered to Rexh, "Whether he kills the Dif or not, if he comes back with his soul in his skin, our father will count him braver than the chief of his army!"

At the end of the third day they said to one another, "May the Dif have eaten him indeed!" So now, on the seventh day, when they saw the vine rope shake, they were in two minds whether to pull it up or not.

They did so, however, and lo, at the end of the rope was the Princess of the black hair.

Cried they, "Who art thou?"

She answered, "I am the eldest of three King's daughters, rescued by your brother Gjuro from the Dif, whom he has slain. Which of you is the Prince Rexh? For he has given me to him as his wife."

When Rexh saw her beauty he thought, "As for Gjuro, he may have the credit for killing the Dif if he wants it." Aloud he said, "I am Rexh," and received her gladly and kissed her on the cheek. Then they let down the vine rope, and hoisting it again, drew up the Princess of the copper-colored hair. Said she, "I am sent to be wife to the Prince Palok." And Palok, beholding her beauty, received her and kissed her with content.

Now when they had let down the vine rope for the third sister, and Gjuro at the well's bottom was about to bind the Beautiful-of-the-Earth to its end, she said to him, "O my dear! I fear for thee at the hands of thy two brothers! What if, in envy, when they have seen me, they seek to do thee a mischief? I pray thee, test their love and loyalty, and when presently the rope comes down for thee, do not bind thyself to it, but a stone instead. Thou canst always return to the white world by mounting one of the white rams, which will bear thee to the Moving Mountains, that open every midday. And from there thou canst easily find the way to this land of thine above the

well. Promise me thou wilt do this, for if thou wert to perish I would die of grief for thee."

He promised her accordingly and she gave him a magic distaff which she carried in her pocket, which, when a knob on its handle was pressed, would spin a thread of pure gold. Said she, "Take this, and until thou givest it back to me with thine own hand, I will marry no one else, no, never."

So they kissed one another and he gave the signal and she was hoisted up, where she said to Rexh and Palok, "Long life to you, King's sons! I who greet you am to be wife to your younger brother, Prince Gjuro."

But when they saw her with her golden hair, lovelier than both the others as the moon is lovelier than two small stars, the brothers turned green with envy. Said they to themselves, "Is he to have not only all the credit, but this Beautiful-of-the-Earth into the bargain?" And as they let the vine rope down to hoist it for the last time with Gjuro, Rexh whispered behind his hand to Palok, "When he is midway let us slash the vines through, so that he will fall and be dashed to pieces. After we are rid of him we can settle between ourselves which of us shall have her."

So that they did, and the rope snapped, and the stone was swallowed in the abyss, while the two

scoundrels beat their breasts, crying, "Alas! Our brave brother has been killed! How shall we tell our father?" And pretending thus to mourn, they took the three King's daughters to the palace.

Meanwhile Gjuro, at the well's bottom, saying to himself, "Her wisdom has saved my life!" cut off the end of the rope that showed the marks of the knives, and putting it with the distaff into his breast, went back through the winding tunnel to the Underworld. There he followed his former trail till he came to where the two rams, one white and one black, were grazing. He mounted the white ram, which instantly set out running more swiftly than could be told. It ran one day, it ran two days, and on the third day it reached the Moving Mountains, where he dismounted and lay down to rest. Thus, when at the next noon the mountains opened with the *bumbulim* of thunder, he came through them into the white world, and set out for his own land, which was so far distant that a galloping horse could not have reached it in a month.

Thus it was with him. And as for his brothers Rexh and Palok, the King heard their story with tears, and the whole capital grieved with him for the death of his son Gjuro. The three King's daughters he housed in the palace as his royal guests, till the weddings of the

two eldest with the Princes should be prepared. The brothers, however, went to him, and said they, "O our father, we have no desire to marry them, but we are both in love with their younger sister, the Beautiful-of-the-Earth."

Exclaimed the King, "Ye cannot both marry her. Thou, Rexh, as the eldest, hast the best right." And he sent for the Beautiful-of-the-Earth and told her his decision.

She answered, "I was promised to thy youngest son, Prince Gjuro, and his wedding gift to me was to have been a distaff that would spin a thread of pure gold. Only if thy son Rexh gives me such a distaff will I marry him."

Then the King sent for his chief goldsmith and said to him, "My son, the Crown Prince, must have for gift to his bride a distaff that will spin a thread of pure gold. Make me such a one and I care not what thou askest for it."

Exclaimed the goldsmith, "O King's Majesty, never have I heard of such a thing, and only a great magician could make it!"

At that the King was angered. He shouted, "Bring me the distaff in three days or thou shalt be hanged!" So the goldsmith went home weeping salt tears, saying to himself, "Oh, the injustice of rulers!" And he

fell to studying all his books on the properties of metals, but could gain no comfort from them.

Now at this time the Prince Gjuro, after crossing a hundred mountains and valleys, reached the capital. As he passed along the street he saw the shops were decorated with banners, and asked one of the shopkeepers the reason. He was worn from the long travel so that no one had known him, and the man replied, "Thou art surely a stranger in the city! Our Crown Prince, on the third day from now, is to marry a Beautiful-of-the-Earth from a foreign land."

At that Gjuro said to himself, "Can she so soon have forgotten her promise to me?" And he sat down on the curb in melancholy. Across the way was the shop of a goldsmith, and through the door he heard the man bemoaning himself, saying, "Would that I could find the distaff that spins the gold thread! Without it I am a lost man!"

When he heard this, Gjuro entered the shop and asked him, "What is thy need of such a distaff, that thou sayest thou art a lost man without it?"

The man told him of the plight in which he stood, and Gjuro rejoiced, thinking, "My darling is true to me, and has done this to avoid marrying my brother!" Said he, "Take me as thy apprentice and give me wood and tools, and I will make the distaff

for thee. But I must take it to the King with mine own hands."

The goldsmith agreed joyfully, and gave him an inner room and all tools and materials, while Gjuro locked himself in and spent the time making chips, till on the third day he came forth with the distaff the Beautiful-of-the-Earth had given him. He showed it to the goldsmith, who, when he saw it spinning a thread of pure gold, was enraptured, and clothing Gjuro in his best robe, sent him with it to the palace. There Gjuro exhibited it to the King, who took it to the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, saying, "Here is my son's bridal gift to thee—no less than the gold-spinning distaff—and now nothing need delay your marriage."

The instant she saw it, she knew it for her own, and her heart leaped, knowing that Gjuro had brought it. Asked she, "Who has made it for the Prince?" The King replied, "My chief goldsmith." Said she, "Let me see it spin." But while Gjuro, when he exhibited it, had pressed the knob in its handle, the King knew not the secret, and try as he would, in his hands it would spin only a thread of wool.

Said she, then, "O King's Majesty, summon the man who brought it and let me speak to him."

He bade them bring Gjuro before them, and she handed him the distaff, saying, "Give it to me with

thine own hands." So he did so, when she said, "O King's Majesty, look upon this man. Dost thou not know him?" And, looking, the King's eyes were opened and he cried, "My son, my son!"

Then both told him their stories, and Gjuro showed him the piece of vine rope that bore the marks of the knives. The King summoned Rexh and Palok, who, when they beheld their brother alive and well, turned as white as curdled milk. Said he, "O ye false hearted! Know ye any cause why I should not this day have your shamed heads stricken from your bodies?"

And they, seeing their doom upon them, fell at his feet, confessing their fault and praying forgiveness. Gjuro also added his prayer to theirs, till the King said, "Very well, ye are my sons, and this shall be passed over. But ye shall not inherit my kingship, and thy brother Gjuro shall rule the land after me."

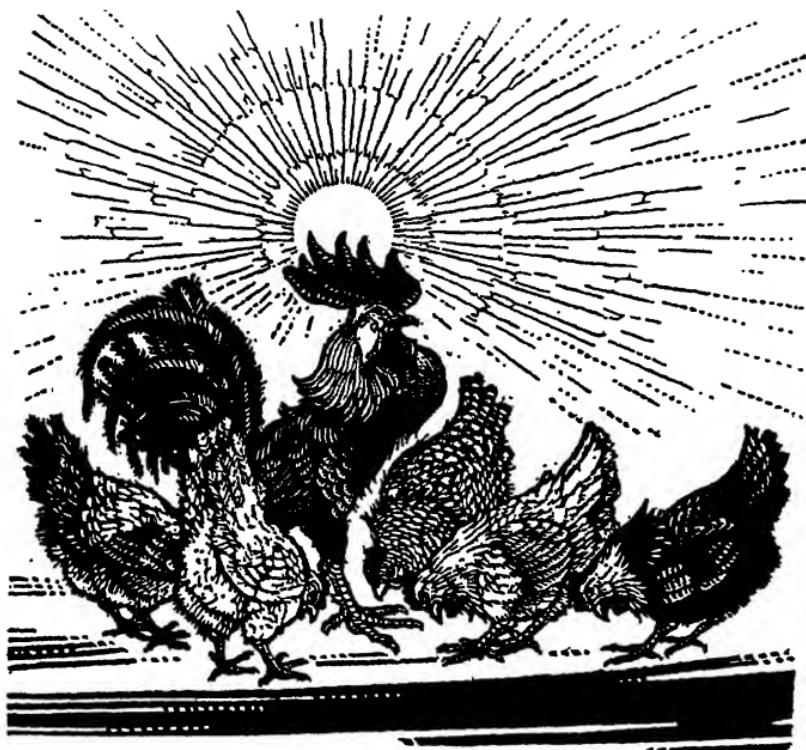
Then he asked the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, "Is it thy wish that these worthless ones wed thy two sisters?" She answered, "O King's Majesty, let them be returned to our father, that he may find fitting husbands for them."

So this was done, and Rexh married the saddler's daughter and Palok nobody at all. But Gjuro wedded the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, and they lived together all their lives in happiness, and Gjuro after his father

ruled that land. But none of his sons was strong enough to wield the magic sword, nor has any man drawn it from its scabbard to this day.

*Here's your tale. I don't care a jot
Whether it's true or whether it's not!*

THE MAN WHO UNDERSTOOD THE SPEECH
OF ANIMALS



THE MAN WHO UNDERSTOOD THE SPEECH OF ANIMALS

OF OLD TIME in the Land-of-the-Eagle there was a farmer, young in years, but handsome and as strong as the rocks. His parents had died leaving him a melon patch, an ox, a female donkey, and a flock of sheep, and with these, by the help of God and the angels, he and his wife lived in content. Being of a generous nature, when the sun was hot

as the core of a fire and wayfarers who passed along the road were as limp as boiled macaroni, he used to call the oldest of them in and seating them in his melon patch, bid them eat of the fruit as much as pleased them. For this he would ask no pay, and when they departed would say to each, "Take a melon or two with thee, to refresh thy journey."

One day as he strolled in the near-by forest he beheld through the thicket a tree which had been set on fire, and by it was a monk about whose neck was coiled a huge serpent with jaws as wide as a fisherman's trap basket; and to his astonishment the snake and the monk appeared to be talking together, the man in his human tongue and the snake in the hissing speech of the belly-crawlers.

When he saw this the farmer crept close behind the bushes to watch them, and when thus he came within earshot, he heard the monk say to the serpent, "Nay, but for thee to treat me thus is an evil act. For have I not just now saved thy life? If I had not seen thee caught in the burning tree and held the pole for thee to glide down upon thou wouldst by now be a black cinder! And how shouldst thou requite my good deed by leaping upon me to strangle and devour me?"

At that the snake in anger whistled and hissed high

and hissed and whistled low, and the man replied, "It may be true, as thou sayest, that man in general is an enemy of the serpent kind, which he kills wherever he finds them. But I am a servant of the God who created all living creatures, and I take not the life of anything."

At that the serpent snapped its tail and its eyes grew smoky red as hot coals, and it hissed and whistled high and low, till the man said, "As I cannot convince thee that to slay me would be an evil act, let us submit the case to a judge. In yonder clearing a horse is grazing. Let him decide betwixt us."

Then the snake loosened its coils, so that the monk could walk, and he set out with its loathsome weight resting on his shoulders, the farmer following unobserved to the edge of the clearing, where he hid himself behind a pomegranate shrub to watch. There the monk called to him the horse, which was half dead on its hoofs, so skinny that its bones stood out like the ribs of a dust-heap umbrella, and set forth his situation, saying, "We ask thee to give judgment on the case."

And when the snake in its turn had hissed and whistled, the starveling nag drooped its neck awhile in thought, after which it neighed and trumpeted and whinnied. Said the monk, "O Horse, how canst

thou hold that it is just for the snake to devour me? Is it my fault that thy master, now thou art grown old in his service and can work no more, has turned thee out for crow's-meat, and has already bargained with the saddler for thy hide?"

Then the bag of bones snorted and whickered again while the serpent hissed its satisfaction, till the monk said to it, "It may be true, as thou dost argue, that man is greedy and selfish and never satisfied, but that is no just reason why I, who have done thee naught but good, should lose my life. It is clear that this horse has a personal grievance and is unfit to pass upon our dispute. Yonder on the meadow at the edge of the forest is a water-buffalo which we should find an impartial judge."

The serpent agreeing to this, the monk carried it on to the meadow, the farmer trailing them as before, and there laid the case before the buffalo, which stood switching its tail with the grass up to its knees, begging it to give decision.

When he had finished speaking it pawed the ground, and lowed and bellowed for a lengthy while, when the monk smote his hands together in despair, exclaiming, "Though thou hast labored ten years under the yoke of thy master, dragging it with thy

shoulders, and though, now that thou art too aged for such work, he is fattening thee for the butcher, yet that has naught to do with my case." And he said to the serpent, "This water-buffalo also is prejudiced by an unlucky experience of his own and cannot declare justly."

At this the snake reared its head, hissing and whistling and yammering with its jaws clip-clappling, so that the farmer, watching, looked to see the monk devoured that instant. "The poor man," said he to himself, "for all his being able to understand the tongues of animals, is like to lose his life. But perhaps I can help him." And he rose up from his hiding place, and catching the monk's eye, when the serpent's head was turned away, pointed to himself, making signs that he should judge the case.

So the monk said to the snake, "Thou art animal and I man, and after all it is only right that this affair should be submitted also to one of mine own kind. Let us find a man, therefore, and ask his opinion."

To this the serpent could not but agree, and they went a little way toward the highway, when the farmer came from behind the bush and met them. "Why, here is one of my kind," said the monk,

and proceeded to relate how he had saved the serpent from the burning tree and how the serpent, in return,



was bent on devouring him. And said he, "We pray thee, sir, to render thy judgment whether this should be."

Said the farmer, "All my life I have judged hard cases, but this is more difficult than any I have been concerned with. First of all, I must examine the tree where this occurred."

Said the monk, "That is easy," and with the snake coiled about his neck, he led him into the forest and to the tree, whose lower branches were still afire.

Said the farmer then, "Show me the pole thou didst hold for the snake to glide down on."

The monk said, "There it lies at thy feet."

The farmer took the pole and examined it closely, then said to the serpent, "In order to understand the case fully I must see how thou didst come down from the tree upon it."

At that the snake hissed and whistled, and the monk said, "It declares there is nothing easier. I have only to let it climb up the stick and it will show thee."

Said the farmer, "Do so."

So the monk held the pole and thrust its end into the tree's upper branches and the snake uncoiled itself from his neck and wound about the pole and ascended into the tree.

When it was there, however, the farmer dropped the pole on the ground, and said he, "I suddenly

remember that I have on hand a piece of business far from here which will prevent my judging this affair."

The monk replied, "But it will take only a moment for the snake to come down."

Then the farmer took the monk by the sleeve and said he, "Thou art a holy man, and beloved by Heaven no doubt, but in this matter I can instruct thee. The case is now in the state in which thou didst find it, and the serpent will receive its just payment for the treachery it showed thee."

Said the monk, "Thou art right; I did not think of that." And he went with the farmer to his cottage, lost in admiration of his cleverness.

He stayed with him that day, he stayed with him two days, he stayed with him three days, and the third afternoon he said to him, "I must now go upon my way, but as the saying is 'Throw a good deed into the sea and it will come back to thee in the salt,' and before I say farewell it is in my mind to reward thee for saving my life from the snake."

The farmer answered, "I want no reward."

But said the monk, "If thou desirest wealth, I can make thee richer than any Bey in these parts."

Replied the farmer, "With my house and melon patch I have all I want."

“Wouldst thou be powerful? I can make thee Governor of this province.”

“No,” the farmer answered, “taking care of so many people would be great labor. I have trouble enough taking care of my sheep.”

Said the monk, then, “Is there nothing thou wouldst like to have?”

The farmer thought awhile, and at last said he, “It would be amusing if I, too, like thee, could understand the speech of animals. I have my ox and my donkey, my sheep, my dogs, and my chickens. I would like to know what they say to one another, as thou didst understand the speech of the serpent, the horse, and the water-buffalo.”

Said the monk, “I will confer this gift upon thee, but only on condition that for thy very life’s sake thou tell no one that thou dost possess it. For if thou dost, at that very moment thou wilt die.”

“Very well,” said the farmer, “I will tell no one, not even my wife.”

So the monk breathed into his ear a secret word which enabled him to understand the speech of every kind of animal that ran or crept or swam or flew, and went his way, and the farmer never again saw him in this life.

Now next day the farmer plowed a portion of his

field and that evening, as he sat outside his door resting, he heard the ox lowing and the jenny braying in their wattle, and listening he could understand their conversation.

Asked the ox, "O my friend, how is it thou art able to lie at ease, munching good fodder, while I have to drag our master's plow all day long?"

The donkey answered, "Because the good God gave to me brains and to thee horns."

Said the ox, "Since thou art so wise, perhaps thou canst tell me how I, too, can save myself a day's work now and then."

"Why," said the jenny, "to-night eat none of the hay our master gives thee, and to-morrow morning, when he comes to take thee out to plow, do thou drool and dribble and he will think thee ailing from the sun and will let thee stay here all day idle."

So the ox did as the donkey had advised, and that night refused his feed, though from his hard day's labor he was well-nigh faint from hunger, and in the morning when the farmer came he groaned and lolled his tongue out and rolled up his eyes.

Now the farmer, having overheard the words that had passed betwixt the two animals the evening before, and knowing well the ox's intention, pretended to be deceived. "Alas," he said aloud, "the

poor beast is sick. He shall rest to-day, and the donkey, who will soon be too fat from lack of exercise, shall take his place."

So saying, he took away the last wisp of hay from the ox's stall and dragged the jenny to the field, where he harnessed her to the heavy plow and plowed lustily till sundown, till she was like a broken wheelbarrow, and when the farmer led her back to the wattle, lay down so spent from weariness that she had scarce strength to nibble a carrot.

Presently the ox lowed to her, "O my friend! Through thy cleverness I have spent a day of ease and quiet. How can I thank thee sufficiently?"

Asked the donkey, "Hast thou lain down all day?"

The ox replied, "I have not so much as lifted my head from the ground. A few more days like this will make a new creature of me."

When the jenny heard this she groaned, and said, "My poor ox, I have sad news for thee."

Asked the ox, "What is that?"

Said the other, "To-day, while I plowed in thy stead, our master called his wife to him and said, 'The poor ox is sick and I fear is about to die. It will be better to butcher him to-morrow so that we can sell the flesh. Go thou now and bargain with the saddler for his hide.'"

Hearing this the ox lowed in fear and asked he, "What can I do to save my life?"

The donkey replied, "There is only one chance for thee. Get to thy hoofs at once and frisk and shake thy tail and bellow till our master brings thee the night's hay, and when he sees thee recovered and in good fettle once more it may be he will lay by his intention to butcher thee."

So the ox leaped up and pawed the ground and snorted and bellowed till the farmer came and tossed a bundle of hay in the manger, when he fell upon it and began to munch as greedily as if it had been salted meadow grass, at which the farmer, who had been listening outside the wattle to hear their conversation, having compassion on the poor beast's alarm, said aloud, "Well, it seems thou art thyself again, so there will be no need to send for the butcher."

The talk of the pair together and the cleverness of the donkey had tickled the farmer mightily, and he went into his cottage chuckling, so that his wife asked him, "What art thou laughing at?"

He answered, "Nothing."

Said she, "Only an idiot laughs at nothing."

"Well," said he, "it was only something that had to do with our ox and donkey."

“I have never seen anything to laugh at about either of them,” said his wife. “Tell me what it was.” But he only chuckled and lay down before the fire and went to sleep.

Now next morning he said to his wife, “To-day we shall go to the mountain to count our sheep.” Accordingly, she prepared food and a bundle of quilts to sleep on and he loaded the jenny with these and mounted atop the load with his wife behind him and they set off along the trail. The donkey had a foal, which followed its dam, and after a time the foal, becoming tired, brayed to her, “Mother, I am tired. Why can I not get on thy back, too?”

The donkey replied, “Nay, my child. Thou must use thine own legs. I am carrying two persons and all this luggage, and moreover, though our master does not yet know this, I am in foal and should be carrying no burden at all on my back.”

When the farmer heard this he said to his wife, “I think the poor jenny is overloaded; let us get down and walk.”

Cried she, “Whoever heard of such a thing! She is well able to carry double our weight.”

But said he, “We shall walk the rest of the way.”

So she got down, grumbling, and trudged behind him.

Presently she said, "Thou gavest no thought to the donkey till she brayed to her foal. Why should that have made thee think her unfit to bear us?"

He replied, "Ask me no questions, for I cannot tell thee that." And at his answer she grew even angrier.

At sundown they came to the sheepfold, where the farmer stabled the donkey and bade the shepherd kill a lamb and roast it for their supper. The shepherd took a young ewe and made ready to cut its throat, when the ewe bleated to its dam, "O Mother! He will kill me!" And the mother sheep answered, "Baa-a-a! My child, I have borne many lambs and the jackals have killed all but thee. Nevertheless, if our master must eat thee, we can do nothing."

When he heard this, the farmer said to the shepherd, "Let it go and choose another."

The man did so, when the lamb he brought bleated likewise to its dam, "O Mother! He is about to kill me!" And the mother sheep replied, while tears ran down her snout, "Baa-a-a! My dearest, our master has had many lambs from me, and the jackals killed some and the wolves others, and the shepherd himself has eaten all the rest but thee. Nevertheless, though thou art my only one, we can do nothing." And hearing this the farmer bade the shepherd let that lamb go and chose a third.

The shepherd did so, and this one also bleated in fear to its dam, and the mother sheep answered, "O my little one! Thou art the fifth lamb I have borne, and by God's mercy ye are still alive. We are in our master's hands, and if he wills this thing nothing can help us." So the farmer said, "Kill it," and the shepherd killed and roasted it for their supper.

While they ate, the wife said to her husband, "When the first two lambs bleated, thou didst spare them, but the third we are now eating. Does one lamb bleat differently from another, then?" But he gave her no answer, and she lay down to sleep more angry at him than ever.

In the night the wolves came and howled about the house, and the dogs answered them, and the noise awoke the farmer and his wife and he listened to hear what they said. The wolves howled to the dogs, "*Wa-ooo-eee!* Let us come and take our meat. We will kill three sheep and one of them we will leave for you."

Now the farmer kept three dogs there. Two were young dogs which the shepherd made much of, petting them and feeding them of the best; but the other was old and feeble, with only two teeth left in his head, and he was lucky when the shepherd

threw him a crust of mouldy bread and often slept as hollow as a cow's horn.

When the wolves howled thus, the young dogs answered them: "*Yip-yip!* Come and take the three lambs. We will yelp and bark and make great outcry, but fear not. We will not oppose you, and do ye leave one of the dead lambs where we can find it and eat it to-morrow." But the old dog barked fiercely, saying, "*Waugh!* Come not here, or ye shall carry off the two teeth I have in your filthy hides! I who have eaten my master's bread from my puppyhood will defend his sheep with my life!"

When he heard, the farmer woke the shepherd and sent him to drive the wolves away, and when the man returned he said to him, "In the morning bring all three of the dogs to me."

At sunup, after they had breakfasted, the shepherd brought the dogs and the farmer said, "Kill the two young ones and get a pair in their places. The old dog I will take back with me to my house."

Said the shepherd, "What! Wilt thou kill these two and save the worthless one?"

The farmer replied, "Do as I tell thee." So the shepherd did so, and the farmer, after he had counted his sheep, set off with his wife for home, with the old dog at their heels.

Said she, as they plodded along the trail, "The matter of the donkey and the lambs was curious enough, but thy treatment of the dogs was even stranger. In the night the young ones howled against the wolves more loudly than the old one, and surely they are the better and the stronger. Why didst thou have them killed?"

He replied, "It will do thee no good to pester me with questions."

At that she began to weep and upbraid him, saying, "Thou hast ceased to love me as other husbands do their wives!" Said he, "How canst thou say so! We live together, we eat and drink together what Heaven provides. And never in my life have I beaten thee or treated thee with other than kindness. What more dost thou want?"

She answered, "Thou art keeping secrets from me."

Asked he, "What secrets?"

She replied, "The secret that is behind thy conduct with the donkey, the ox, the lambs, and the dogs."

Said he, "If I told thee that, I would die."

But said she, "Thou sayest that only to put me off!" and when they reached home she sat down in a corner and left the fire unkindled and would not prepare the food or sweep the floor, till he said to

himself, "If I do not tell her, she will give me no rest till the day I die, and a man might as well be dead and done with it as live in such a turmoil!"

So at last he said to her, "Very well, if thou carest more to know the secret than to have me alive, I will tell it to thee. But since when I do so I must die, do thou prepare the meats and bread for my funeral, that my name be not blackened before our friends and neighbors."

When she heard this she rose up joyfully and lighted the fire and fell to baking and roasting, while he sat in melancholy on his doorstep, wondering that she could be so hard of heart, while the old dog he had brought from the sheepfold, having heard what had passed between him and his wife, drooped its ears in grief, and sat moaning in the yard with its muzzle between its paws.

Now the farmer had a flock of forty hens, with a cock as their lord, and the cock was strutting among them, flapping its wings and crowing, and the dog said to the cock, "*Woof!* Takest thou not shame to thyself to be thus parading when our master is in such desperate case?"

Asked the cock, "What is his difficulty?"

Rejoined the dog, "He has a certain secret whose nature I do not know, which he may not tell under

pain of death. But his wife demands that he acquaint her with it."

"*Kek-ek-ek!*" said the cock. "I see no harm from that."

Said the dog, "Her demand has so worn upon him that he will tell it to her and will die."

When it heard this the cock shook its wattle and flapped its wings with laughter. "*Kek-ek-ek—Karoo!*" it crowed. "If he is such a fool there is no help for him. We shall be much better off with a master of more sense."

Snarled the dog, "Oh, ingrate! How canst thou say such a thing!"

Crowed the cock, "I have here forty wives, and when I so much as look at them they tremble. That miserable wretch has only one, and he lets her send him to his grave. Did ever one hear of such a jest? *Kek-ek-ek—Karoo!*"

Asked the dog, "But what is there for our poor master to do?"

"Why," the cock replied, "he should cut a stick from yonder mulberry tree as thick as his two thumbs and beat her till her back is as soft as a pan of mush and she has lost all desire to learn his secret, whatever it is! But no doubt he is too much of an idiot to think of such a cure for her!"

But the farmer on the doorstep, hearing, said to himself, "The cock is right, and animals are wiser than us men!" And he took his knife and cut a stick as thick as his wrist, and going in to his wife, he fell on her and beat her till it broke, while she screamed till the roof tiles split.

Said he, then, "Dost thou still desire to know my secret?"

She answered, "Aye."

Then he went and cut another cudgel as thick as the calf of his leg and came back with it, but when she saw it in his hand she fell down before him, crying, "Nay, I repent. Thou canst keep thy secret till Judgment Day for all of me!" So he hung the mulberry club on the wall, and all his life he kept his secret to himself.

And so much the better, and so much the better for us; and so much the worse, and so much the worse for them!

*Doom-doom, O Drum! Bugle, bugle, toótari!
Thus says the tale told round about Scutari.*

THE BOY WHO TOOK THE LETTER TO THE
WORLD WHERE THE DEAD LIVE



THE BOY WHO TOOK THE LETTER TO THE WORLD WHERE THE DEAD LIVE

ON A DAY AND A YEAR there was-
What do you suppose? A poor hunter who died,
leaving behind him a wife and a boy babe only a
day old. The mother named the child Gjelosh, and

brought him up herself, and always as he grew he played alone, because the other boys of the neighbourhood jeered at him for his poverty and shabby clothes.

Sometimes when he would come home in tears his mother would ask him, "Why dost thou weep, little eagle?" He would answer, "The boys shout at me because I have no father." And she would say, "Never mind. No father is better than some fathers."

One day he asked her, "What was my father?" But she would only say, "He was what he was and nothing else."

So the years went over the tops of the mountains till he was fourteen, when he said to her, "I will know how my father earned our bread. If thou dost not tell me I will go away and thou wilt see me no more." Then said she, "Thy father was a hunter, but it brought him no good."

"Then I will be a hunter also," he said, "and we shall see what it will bring me. Give me his gun that I may use it as he did."

When she saw that his mind was set on it, she took the gun from a chest in which it was hidden, and gave it to him, saying, "Well, then, if hunter thou must be! But no luck will come to thee from it."

He took the weapon and cleaned it—for it was as

rusty as a pair of old fire irons—and made bullets and began to practise with it, going hunting every day, and before long he had become a better hunter than his father had been.

One day, while he hunted the forest far from home, he heard the yelping of wolves, and hastening to the spot he found a little horse, gray in color with dun markings, caught in a thicket and surrounded by a band of wolves that sat on their haunches with their jaws slavering and slobbering, waiting till it should have exhausted itself with its struggles to leap in and devour it.

When he shot their leader the rest of the wolves fled, and he released the horse, saying, "Poor animal! Thou hast had a narrow escape!" Then to his amazement the little horse spoke in a human voice. "Thanks to thee," it said. "Thou hast given me my life."

"What!" exclaimed Gjelosh, in astonishment. "Canst thou talk man's speech?"

"Yes," the little horse replied. "I have that gift. I tell thee because I know thou hast a heart that is kind. Only once in a hundred years is a horse foaled like me."

Asked Gjelosh, "What is thy name, and who is thy master?"

"My name," it answered, "is Mingo. I have no master, for as soon as my legs were strong enough I ran away from the farm where I was born."

"Why didst thou do that?" Gjelosh asked.

"I was afraid," said the little horse, "that it would be discovered what a wonderful horse I was, and then I would be kept a prisoner for folk to look at. As for me, I love my freedom and cannot bear a halter on my neck. I pray thee to be my master. Only love me and do not halter me, and I will serve thee all my life."

When he heard this Gjelosh put his arm about the little horse's neck and kissed it on the nose, and said, "My little Mingo, I love thee already, and I am proud to be thy master. And if ever thou dost become tired of me, thou shalt have thy liberty that moment."

Then said Mingo, "Promise me thou wilt tell no one that I can speak, else I may be taken from thee."

Gjelosh promised this, and took the little horse home and showed it to his mother. But said she, "Of what use is a colt? It is not old enough to carry thee."

"It will grow," he answered, and he built it a stall beside their dwelling and each morning took it to the meadow to roll in the dew and rubbed its coat

with dried grass till it shone like copper. When it grew strong enough he rode it to the hunt, and the little horse was so swift it could outrun a wild hare, and every day Gjelosh loved it the more.

One day, as they hunted wild boars, Gjelosh found in the roots of an oak tree two shining stones. He put them into his girdle and when he came home he thrust them into a chink of the wall beside the door.

Now that day the King of the country died, and in the town the public crier made his rounds, crying, "For three nights, in mourning for the King, no house shall burn a light after the second hour." So in all the place that night no lamp or candle burned, and the Governor had soldiers posted in the streets to see that the order was obeyed.

In the morning, however, report was made that while every other house was pitch-dark the dwelling of Gjelosh the hunter showed a light, and the Governor commanded that he be brought before him. Said he, "Didst thou not hear my command? And how hast thou dared burn a light ~~in~~ thy house?"

Gjelosh replied, "Long life to thee, O Governor! I am a poor man and cannot afford a candle, but lie down and rise up with the sun. There was no light burning ~~in~~ my house last night." The Governor sent soldiers who searched the house, but they found no

sign of a lamp or a candle in it, and he released him.

When Gjelosh got home he said to his mother, "Some enemy of mine has done this. To-night we shall sleep in the field so that no one can accuse us." So at sunset he set her on the back of the little horse and led it to the field and they slept there under the stars.

Now that night also the soldiers saw that the house was shining. They entered it and found it empty. But seeing that the light came from the wall, they examined it and discovered the two bright stones in the chink beside the doorway, which in the morning they took to the Governor.

When the Governor saw them he cried out with delight, for he had never known their like, and bade them bring Gjelosh before him. Said he, "These stones were hidden in the wall of thy house, and it is they that lighted it at night. Where didst thou get them?"

Gjelosh replied, "I found them in the forest."

The Governor said to himself, "I will take them to the young King and he will give me great reward." And he called for his mounted attendants and riding to the capital, presented them at the palace.

Now the King, who was mourning for his father, was charmed with them. Said he, "Where did these come from?"

The Governor answered, "A hunter of my town found them in the forest, where he hunted wild boar."

Said the King, "Where they come from there must be many. Go and bid him find them and I will build of them a palace whose like is not to be seen in the white world."

The Governor replied, "O Majesty! These are rare stones. It will be hard to come upon even one more such, let alone enough to build a palace."

The King, however, who was a stripling, headstrong and without wisdom, frowned angrily. "See that they are found!" he cried, "or I will take away thy governorship and give it to one who will."

So the Governor rode back in an evil temper, thinking, "I was a fool to take them to him. More must be found now or I shall suffer!" And he sent for Gjelosh and said to him, "The King will have enough of thy shining stones to build him a palace. Go and fetch them or thou art as good as hanged!"

When he heard this Gjelosh went home in dread and told his mother. Said he, "How now shall I save my life? For to build a palace will take thousands of stones, and if I searched a year I should not find three!"

She answered, "Did I not tell thee thy hunting

would bring thee no luck? But mount thy little horse Mingo that thou lovest so much and ride to the forest. Who knows but God may help thee?"

He went to the stall and saddled the little horse, who sped away with him like the wind to the forest; but as he rode despair made him weep, and the tears fell on its neck, and it stopped and said, "O Master, why dost thou weep?" At that, Gjelosh told it how the matter stood, and said he, "This will be our last ride, little comrade, for as I cannot find the stones, I shall surely be hanged."

"If that is all," said Mingo, "weep no longer. For I can show thee enough of them to build the palace."

Cried Gjelosh, "Where are they?"

The little horse answered, "In the mountains, three days' journey from here, is a hoard of them that is guarded by the wild one-eyed donkey Beiram, that can be killed by no man."

"Alas!" exclaimed Gjelosh. "How then can I get them?"

"Only we horses know Beiram's secret," said Mingo, "and it is this. His life is in his single eye. There is but one thing that can put his eye out, and it is the hoof of a horse. I shall do this for thee."

"Nay," cried Gjelosh. "What if he killed thee instead? I would not have thee give thy life for mine!"

“Never fear,” answered the little horse. “I can fight as well as I can run. Take tight hold on my mane, for I shall carry thee there in two hours.” And it set off running so fast that one could not see its hoofs.

In two hours they came to a cleft in the mountains, and Mingo stopped. “Beiram’s hoard lies there,” it said. “Get down from my back so that I may rest.” Gjelosh dismounted and they lay down till the sun was directly overhead, when the little horse rose and shook itself. “Now is the time when Beiram each day comes and lays bare the hoard to see that it is safe,” he said. “Do thou wait here.” And it darted into the cleft of the mountains.

Now scarcely had it vanished when there rose a dreadful scream, and the rocks echoed the sounds of furious battle. Gjelosh climbed a tree from whose top he beheld the Guardian of the Hoard, which was a gigantic donkey, of the color of red blood. Beneath the attack of the little horse Beiram brayed like the roar of an avalanche, while smoke came from his mouth and his one eye shot forth fire. He reared again and again, seeking to crush his small enemy, but Mingo darted in and out like a hound, biting and gouging him with teeth and hoofs till Beiram was beside himself with fury. At last the little horse

began to gallop about him in a circle, and as it flew Beiram turned always about to face it. Till at the three hundredth turn he was so dizzy that he fell to his knees and Mingo, leaping in, smote his eye with its hoof and the fire in it went out and he lay dead.

Seeing this, Gjelosh hastened down from the tree and ran to Mingo. "Glory to thy hoofs!" said he. "Yet I was afraid for thee."

The little horse showed him the hoard, which held ten thousand of the shining stones, and afterward it bore him back to the town, where he told his mother and they rejoiced together.

Next morning he went to the Governor and said, "Give me five hundred pack horses with their leaders, together with food for six days, and I will bring thee the shining stones."

The Governor did so and the stones were brought, and he wrapped each one in a red cloth and set out with them for the capital. When they were piled in the Palace Square they shone so brightly that the whole city needed no lights, and the King, rejoicing, rewarded the Governor richly and sent for the royal architects and builders, who built him a palace more splendid than the realm had ever seen, nor was there one stone too many or one too few.

After that Gjelosh lived in content, spending his

days hunting in the forest on his little horse Mingo, and sleeping soundly at night. One day he shot a lynx of great size whose skin was of perfect color and texture. He took it home and showed it to his mother.

Said she, "Glory to thy eyes! Thou canst sell it for a good price in the market place."

But he answered, "I shall not sell it. I shall hang it over the door of our house, so that folk can admire it and all may know that I am a good hunter."

"Remember the shining stones!" she said. "They brought thee only trouble. Do not display the skin lest more come to thee." But he hung it over the door in pride, and everyone who passed exclaimed at its beauty, and his fame as a hunter went wide.

Now it happened that the Governor passed that way and saw it, and sending for Gjelosh, said to him, "Bring me thy lynx skin that I may give it to the King to say his prayers on, and here is a gold ducat for it."

He replied, "Gladly!" and brought it to him, rejoicing, since the gold was more than he could have got for it in the market.

When the King saw the skin, he said to the Governor, "Where didst thou get this? For it is finer than any I have seen."

Answered the Governor, "I bought it from the same hunter who found the bright stones for thy palace."

Said the King, "He is a remarkable hunter, indeed! Where this came from there must be others. Bid him bring me, within twenty days, a hundred more, that I may carpet the floors of my new palace with them."

"O Majesty!" exclaimed the Governor. "Skins like this must be most rare. I doubt if there be a hundred to be found in all the land."

But the King scowled at him, and said, "Do as I bid thee! I will have them, or thou shalt lose thy head!"

So the Governor departed, saying to himself, "What evil spirit prompted me to give it to him!" And he returned to his town and sent for Gjelosh, and said to him, "The King will have a hundred lynx skins like the one I had from thee. I give thee twenty days to find them. And if thou dost not, thy hands and feet shall be struck off and thou shalt be beaten to death."

When he heard this, Gjelosh went home in fear and foreboding. And his mother said, "What did I tell thee? Wilt thou never learn? But take thy little horse and ride in the forest. Maybe God will show thee what to do."

He mounted Mingo and rode to the forest, but as he rode his tears fell on the little horse's mane, and Mingo stopped and asked him, "O Master, why dost thou weep?" Gjelosh told it his trouble, and said he, "In all my hunting I have killed but one lynx, and in my whole lifetime I could not kill a hundred. Our days of sport together are ended, for in twenty days I shall be dead."

"If that is all," said the little horse, "thou needst not grieve. I know a secret pool in the high mountains where the lynxes come by night to drink."

Gjelosh replied, "The lynx is the most cunning of animals, and its scent is the keenest. By lying in wait I might kill a few, but never enough."

"There is one who can advise us," said the little horse. "It is a Thopch I know. I can take thee to him, and he will aid thee for my sake, for we horses are friends to the dwarfs."

"But the Thopchs live in the Underworld," said Gjelosh. "How can we go there?"

"No need to do that," Mingo replied. "On every full moon he comes forth between the Moving Mountains that open and shut every day at noon, to spend a sun-round basking in the sun. To-night is full moon and we shall find him there. Only give me leave and I will take thee to him in three hours."

Gjelosh bade it do so, and it set out, running faster than a boulder rolls down a cliff, and three hours later it brought him to where the two high mountains stood leaning one against the other. There they waited till noon, when the sun was directly overhead, when it thundered *bumbulim*, and the mountains opened, and out of the gap came skipping the Thopch, who was only as tall as Gjelosh's knee, with a white beard so long that he wore it wrapped about his body instead of a coat, and ears so big that he pinned them together over his head for a turban.

The little horse greeted him, saying, "O Thopch, I have brought hither my master who asks thy counsel. I pray thee aid him for my sake."

Said the Thopch, "The Horse Folk were always friends to us dwarfs, and I will do so."

Then Gjelosh told him his case, and the Thopch, after he had pondered for an hour with his eyes closed, said, "There is only one way in which thou canst kill the lynxes. Demand of the Governor twenty mule-loads of wine three years old. Take them to the pool where the creatures drink, and pour the wine into it and lie in wait for them. They will drink the wine and become drunk, when thou canst kill them all."

Gjelosh thanked the dwarf, and the little horse

bore him back to the town, where he went before the Governor and demanded the mules and the wine.



These were given him, and he tied the twenty mules nose to tail and the halter of the foremost he tied to Mingo's saddle, and the little horse led them to

the secret pool in the forest. Into this he poured the wine and tethering the mules at a distance, hid himself with his gun in the bushes that fringed the pool. And in the night the lynxes came in droves to drink, and the wine made them drunk so that they could not escape, and he killed of them a hundred in less time than a tale-teller could tell of it.

In the morning he rode back to the town and said to the Governor, "Give me twenty butchers, and they shall bring thee the lynx skins for the King's palace."

The Governor, rejoicing, gave him the twenty butchers and Gjelosh led them to the pool, where they fell to skinning the animals and loading the skins onto the mules, and when he returned with them the Governor had them tanned and sewed and journeyed with them himself to the King, giving Gjelosh only another gold ducat for his trouble. As for the King, he found the skins just sufficient to cover the floors of his new palace of shining stones—there was not one too many nor one too few. He rewarded the governor richly and the palace became even more famous than before and folk came from further and further away to see it.

Now for his *feat* of killing the hundred lynxes Gjelosh had become the most famous citizen of the

town and the most celebrated hunter in all the Land-of-the-Eagle. People talked of him more than they talked even of the Governor, so that in time the Governor was overcome with jealousy. Said he to himself, "I am sick of hearing of this huntsman, this son of nobody. If I had not sent him for the bright stones and made him find the lynxes, he would be next door to a beggar still. Yet I receive no credit for it, while his name is in every man's mouth. I will see that he is sent where he will give me no more trouble!"

So he went to the King and said he, "O Majesty! Thou art surely the greatest monarch the world has known! Thou hast built a palace of shining stones more beautiful than the eye of man has ever seen, and hast furnished it with skins rarer and more costly than any brocade. Alas, that the late King, thy royal father, does not know of thy grandeur!"

The young King replied, "That is a sad thought to me. Would, indeed, that he might know of my exploits!"

Asked the Governor, "Why shouldst thou not send a letter to him to acquaint him of thy condition, that he may rejoice with thee?"

Now the King was an ignorant and credulous youth, whom fair words could deceive, and when the

Governor spoke thus he cried out in astonishment, "What! Is it possible, then, for a living man to go to the World Where the Dead Live?"

"Why not?" answered the wily Governor. "Though it would no doubt take a very clever man to do so, and thou shouldst choose the cleverest in all the realm to take thy letter and bring back thy father's answer."

"Why," said the King, "thou art the one, I suppose. Thou art certainly cleverer than my Prime Minister, for it was thou who brought me the shining stones and the lynx skins, and he has never brought me anything but the taxes."

The Governor replied, "It is true, O Majesty, that I am cleverer than thy Prime Minister, and to say so is not to boast unduly. But though I brought thee the stones and the skins, it was not I who found him, but the hunter. In my opinion he is cleverer than I myself."

"To be sure!" said the King. "I did not think of that. He shall go." And he bade the Governor write the letter at once to his dead father, recounting his greatness and telling of the wonder of his new palace, and ordered that Gjelosh, the hunter, be summoned.

When the order reached him Gjelosh mounted his little horse Mingo and rode to the capital in high

spirits, thinking to himself, "The King means to reward me for what I have done. No doubt he will give me much gold, so that I can build me a fine house and eat meat every day!" When he heard what was expected of him, however, his joy turned to fear. "O King's Majesty!" he exclaimed, "a man, dying, may indeed go to the World Where the Dead Live, but how may a living man go there?"

At this the King flew into a passion. Cried he, "Ask of me what thou wilt for the journey, but thou shalt certainly go! And if thou comest back without the answer from my father, thou shalt be buried in the ground to thy neck till thou diest, and the crows shall peck out thy eyeballs!"

When he heard these words Gjelosh went out in great trouble and rode home to tell his mother. Said she, "O my son, this is what thy hunting has brought thee to! But ride on thy little horse to the forest and say a prayer to God. For He helped thee twice and there is luck in threes."

So he mounted Mingo and rode to the forest. And again he wept and the tears fell on the little horse's mane and it stopped, saying, "Master, why weepest thou?"

Gjelosh told his story then, saying, "That scoundrel of a governor has done this. He desires my death,

and we shall hunt no more together. For even the Thopch could not tell us how to escape from this trap."

"Nevertheless," said Mingo, "let us ask him, for the dwarf is very wise. To-night is full moon again, when he comes through the Moving Mountains. Let us go at once."

Said Gjelosh, "Very well, we can only fail." And the little horse set out, running faster than a hawk swoops, and in three hours they came to the two tall mountains. They waited till noon, when the thunder roared *bumbulim* and the mountains split apart, and out came the Thopch.

When they had greeted him Gjelosh told him his case, and the dwarf shut his eyes and pondered an hour, when he opened them and said, "There is only one I know of who is wise enough to aid thee. That is a Beautiful-of-the-Earth who lives in a mountain a sun-round from here, which is the home of a Dif who keeps her his prisoner."

Now the Difs are giants, as tall as pine trees, with black beards that fall to their knees. They are filthy as wild boars and are covered with lice as big as grasshoppers. They live in the Underworld, or on the tops of mountains, eating man's flesh, and when one comes upon a woman alone on the trail, he steals her

away and keeps her to fan the flies from him while he sleeps. A mountain known to be the haunt of a Dif is shunned by everyone, and when the Thopch said this, Gjelosh's heart sank.

But said the little horse, "O Thopch, my master and I thank thee. But tell us how to find the mountain of the Dif."

Said the dwarf, "It is west of here, and stands alone, with its feet in a swamp and its head in the clouds. But go not on the mountain except between noon and sunset. For at that time the Dif is away hunting men to eat. And think not to find the Beautiful-of-the-Earth in her proper form. For when he leaves her, he turns her into something else, such as a rock or a stump of wood, or a cast-off snake skin."

Cried Gjelosh at this, "Alas! There must be thousands of such things on every mountain! It will be impossible to find her, and even if we did so, how can a rock or a stump speak to us?"

Then the Thopch closed his eyes and thought another hour, till at last he opened them and said, "The Dif must each time turn her into something he has not used before. Since he has held her captive these many years, he will have used up all the common things and must by now be compelled to think of things that do not belong to mountains. Look, there-

fore, for something that should belong elsewhere. If thou findest such an object thou hast only to touch it, and it will straightway become the Beautiful-of-the-Earth. She may be able to help thee. That is all I can tell thee."

So Gjelosh thanked him and rode away to the westward, Mingo running its best, till they came, at sunset, to the edge of a great swamp, in the middle of which reared a single mountain, with its feet in the marsh and its head in the clouds.

They rested there that night and till noon next day, when they climbed the mountain and the little horse began galloping hither and thither. All the afternoon they searched vainly, till near nightfall Gjelosh said, "I see something strange hanging in that tree yonder." Mingo galloped to it, and lo, it was a quarter of meat.

Said Gjelosh, "Who can have brought this meat and left it hanging here?"

"Why," said the little horse, "what can it be but the Beautiful-of-the-Earth? Climb the tree and touch it with thy hand."

So Gjelosh dismounted and climbed the tree and put his hand to the meat, and instantly it turned into a woman so beautiful that she could not be described.

“Thank God!” she exclaimed. “Thou art not the Dif! Art thou a man?”

He answered, “Yes.”

Said she, “I have been here many years and thou art the first man I have seen! I pray thee, whoever thou art, take me away with thee before the Dif comes, and I will be either thy slave or thy wife as long as I live. But hasten, for the sun is about to set when the Dif returns, and if he finds thee here he will eat thee.”

“I know not if I shall live long enough to marry thee,” said Gjelosh, “but at any rate the Dif shall have thee no longer.” And he took her down from the tree and wrapped her in his cloak and set her before him on the saddle. As he did so there came a cold wind through the trees and a great roaring at which the ground trembled, and she cried out, “Hasten, for he is coming!”

Gjelosh cried to the little horse, “Run thy best, little comrade!” and Mingo set off swifter than a wild goose flies, down the mountain and across the swamp, faster and faster, through the dusk and moonlight till the dawn. As they rode he told the Beautiful-of-the-Earth his trouble, and said she, “Thou hast rescued me from the Dif, and never fear but in return I shall save thee.”

So they came to his house, where he showed her to his mother, saying, "This is the wife whom I shall marry."

The old woman was astonished at her beauty. But said she, "O my son, canst thou think of marrying a wife when such danger is after thee?"

The Beautiful-of-the-Earth, however, laughed, saying, "Nay, fear not, for no harm shall come to him."

So all lay down and slept till they woke refreshed, and after they had eaten and drunk, she said to Gjelosh, "Go to the King and tell him thou art ready for thy journey to the World Where the Dead Live. But bid him first send criers throughout the realm announcing that whoever desires to send a letter by thy hand may write it and that thou wilt carry it. Meanwhile, thy mother shall hide me in an inner room and do thou say naught of me to anyone."

Gjelosh rode to the capital accordingly, and the King sent criers who cried in all the towns, "Ho, ye! A royal messenger is departing to the World Where the Dead Live. All who would send letters thither have leave to write them." So that the criers brought back a hundred letters.

Now when it became known that Gjelosh the Hunter was to be the messenger to go to the World

Where the Dead Live, the townsfolk said to one another, "Never have we heard of such a thing! Our Gjelosh must be a wise man to have learned the way, and he is a valiant one to dare it!" And they crowded the street before his house day and night, shouting his name, so that the Governor, hearing, was more filled with malice and spite than ever.

As for the King, when the last crier had returned, he sealed all the letters they had brought in a sack, together with his own letter to his dead father, and gave it to the Governor, bidding him send the hunter upon his journey. And the Governor, rejoicing that he was now to see the last of the man he hated, hastened to the town where Gjelosh waited and summoning him, gave him the sack of letters, saying, "Begone on thy errand, fool, and a good riddance to thee!"

So Gjelosh returned to his house, a great crowd at his heels, and going in to the inner room where the Beautiful-of-the-Earth was hidden, said he, "The time has come for me to start. What am I to do?"

She answered, "Ride to the eastward till midnight, then return here by a roundabout way, and be sure no one sees thee on thy way back."

So he went out, and saddling the little horse, put the sack of letters in his saddlebag, and Mingo darted

away over the mountains to the eastward with all the people shouting their farewells after them.

He rode till midnight, when he turned about and bade the little horse take him back by another road, and thus while all in the town slept he came back, with Mingo treading as softly as a cat, and the Beautiful-of-the-Earth put him in one inner room and the little horse in another. There she kept them secretly, giving Gjelosh only a single fig and Mingo only one handful of oats each day. Meanwhile she read all the letters in the sack and wrote an answer to each and every one. The answer she wrote for the dead King said:

“O my son! I have read thy letter with gladness and rejoice in thy power and greatness which is so well worthy of my line. This is to tell thee that I rule here in this world as I ruled in thine. Only one thing I miss—that is the aid and wisdom of my Governor, by whose advice thou hast sent me thy so-welcome letter. And I pray thee to send him to me without delay, and to put in his place the messenger who has brought me thy letter. This is the word of thy beloved father.”

When the letters were finished—and by then both Gjelosh and the little horse were as thin as starved hens and Gjelosh’s face had no more blood in it than a squash—she sealed them in the sack and burned the

ones to which they were answers. Then, late one night, she saddled Mingo, and put Gjelosh on his back, with the sack in his saddlebag, and said she, "Ride softly till thou art out of the town, then take the first road to the capital, and give the letters to the King."

This he did, so that at dawn the soldiers before the palace of shining stones saw approaching them a man who was nothing but skin and bone, mounted on a little horse whose legs were like pipe-stems, so weak that it swayed from side to side. Said Gjelosh, "Tell the King that I, Gjelosh the Hunter, have returned from the World Where the Dead Live, with a letter for him from his royal father."

When they heard this they cried out in amazement, and lifted him from the saddle and carried him into the palace and gave him food and wine, and the little horse they tended in the royal stable. As for the King, when he heard the news he did not even wait to take off his nightcap, and when he read the letter from his dead father he wept with joy.

He ordered bells to be rung and flags to be hoisted and sent for the Governor, who, when he heard the hunter had returned, was so filled with rage that he came before the King as pale as ashes.

"O King's Majesty!" cried he. "This man is an

impostor. He has no more been to the World Where the Dead Live than have I! None can go there but the dead themselves."

"What!" said the King. "Didst thou not thyself bid me send him? And did not thine own hand write my letter to my father to which he hath brought me an answer?"

"That answer he must have written himself!" cried the Governor.

Then Gjelosh spoke. "Alas!" he said, "I am only a poor hunter, without education, and I have never learned to write!"

"He is a liar!" shouted the Governor.

At that the young King's eyes turned red with anger. "If thou didst bid me send him where no living man can go, by thine own speech thou didst think to make mock of me!" said he. "And if thou doubttest the journey can be made, thou shalt prove it to thyself. My father asks for thee. Get thee gone, therefore, and delay not an hour lest I forget his request and hang thee in the public Square!"

So the Governor went from the palace tottering on his feet, and fled the country and nobody has ever found him. And Gjelosh was made Governor in his place, and he took the wise Beautiful-of-the-Earth to wife and they lived happily ever after.

And as for the little horse Mingo, he rode him every day in the forest, and talked with him in secret, and they were the best of comrades all their lives long.

This story was told me by a *jijapajumas* one evening in the afternoon on the long short road that goes over and under the hill. Health to us all!

THE BOY WHO WAS FATED TO BE A KING





THE BOY WHO WAS FATED TO BE A KING

WHETHER YOU BELIEVE IT or doubt it, no matter. May all good things come to you who listen!

Once and once there was a king of the country beyond where the snow lies heavy on the necks of the mountains who left his affairs in the hands of his Prime Minister and set out afoot as a wayfarer to see how folk fared in other lands.

He went as far as he went, till he came to the southern land of the Toshk, where one night the dark overtook him with a rain like whips and the *bum-bullim* of thunder. He saw a house near the road and knocking at its door, said to the woman who opened it, "Blessings on this dwelling! I am a stranger who asks shelter for the night."

She replied, "Enter. The evening bread is ready and thou art welcome." So he went in and sat down before the fire and she gave him to drink a cup of wine steeped from grape skins, and after that a meal of goat's milk, cornmeal, cheese, and wild honey.

Now a table stood in the corner of the room, and presently the woman opened a chest and taking from it a cloth embroidered with gold, spread it on the table and set thereon a silver pitcher, with three dishes of stewed lamb and three wedges of bread, and by each dish she set knife and spoon.

He wondered at this, and said, "If thou dost entertain company to-night, I fear my presence is unwelcome and I will wend my way."

She replied, "Not so. Although my husband is not here, the door of this house is open to thee. In the cradle yonder lies a boy babe born to me three days ago, and to-night being the third night the Mira will come."

Asked he, "What are the Mira?"

She answered, "They are female spirits, very tall, with faces as white as chalk and long black hair. In these mountains they come whenever a boy babe is born, to give him his fate."

Said he, "I am not of this land. What if they be displeased at my presence?"

She answered, "No doubt it is by their plan that thou art here."

Then she filled the silver pitcher with honey and threw into it three almonds and set the door ajar, after which she seated herself beside him, saying, "It is the time. Speak no word while they are here else misfortune will follow thy trail for twice nine years."

So he sat silent, and presently the door flew open without a knock and in came the three Mira. They were taller than human women, with faces white and terrible, and each wore a single black robe without a girdle. They said no word, but sat down at the table and ate the food and drank the honey.

When they had eaten and drunk the eldest took the babe from the cradle and stripped it naked, and holding it up, made a sign with her finger on its forehead. Said she, "Time will go and time will go, and again there will come hither this man who sits by the fire." The second then came and took the babe from her

and wrote on its breast with her finger, and said, "Time will go and time will go, and this babe will journey to this man who sits by the fire." Lastly, the third came and took the child and wrote with her finger on its back, saying, "Time will go and time will go, and this babe will stand in the place of this man who sits by the fire."

Then the eldest swaddled the babe again and laid it in the cradle and all three went through the open door and vanished.

The woman spoke no word to the King, but when she had washed the dishes and put the silver pitcher and the gold-embroidered cloth again in the chest, she lay down in the corner and went to sleep.

The King lay half the night wondering at what he had seen. Thought he, "These Mira are spirits and what they will must be!" And in the morning, as he ate the breakfast of parched corn the woman set before him, he took a ring from his finger and gave it to her, saying, "Since it is decreed by fate that thy babe is one day to stand in my place, he must be as my son. In my land, which is beyond where the snow lies heavy on the necks of the mountains, I am a person of consequence, and my name is engraved on this ring. When he has come to man's stature, give it to him and let him come to me."

So he bade her farewell and departed. He went as far as he went, visiting ten southern countries, and it was two harvests before he turned again northward. Then, treading in his own footsteps, he came once more to the house where he had seen the Mira, and there was a little boy two years old playing by its door. Said he to himself, "That is no doubt the babe I saw. While I have no son of mine own, yet he who is to stand in my place should be of noble blood, and this child is the son of a peasant with ten sheep and a donkey!" And he repented of what he had told the mother.

He knocked at the door and making himself known to the woman, said to her, "As was decreed by the Mira, I have come again to this place. Since I am now returning to mine own land, I pray thee give me the child now, instead of waiting till he be grown, that I may take him with me."

The woman went to the field to fetch her husband, and after they had consulted together, they gave the King the child, and he set it on his shoulder and took the trail. But no sooner had he come to the other side of the mountains than he lowered it into a deep ravine and abandoned it there and continued his journey.

Now there was a shepherd who browsed his goats on the mountainside, and that evening when he

brought them to the fold to milk them his best goat was dry. So he fell to watching it, and following it one day he found it suckling the little boy in the ravine.



Counting the child a gift from God, he brought him home to his wife and they named him Visojidha and reared him as their own, keeping carefully the ring which he had worn on a cord about his neck under his shirt. Thus he lived till he was eighteen, tree-straight and tall, and the handsomest lad in seven villages, who sooner than break his word to any man would have drowned himself.

At that time the shepherd gave the ring to him and told him his history. Said he, "It is not good for thee to live always in our poor fashion. This ring has a name engraved upon it. Go and seek out its owner and perhaps thou mayest find thy rightful place in the white world." And he took from a hiding place in the wall three silver pieces that he had laid by, and gave them to him, saying, "This will provide for thy wants while thou art journeying."

"But what wilt thou do without me?" exclaimed Visojidha.

"There are only the sheep," the shepherd answered, "and my son Ndrek and I will care for them."

Now Ndrek was an idle lad, who had always hated Visojidha for his good looks and good nature, and Visojidha feared that without him his foster parents would suffer, but the shepherd insisted that he go to find his luck, so on a day he bade them both farewell, weeping, and took to the trail. He went two days, he went three days, and on the fourth, as he climbed the mountain, Ndrek overtook him.

"What dost thou here?" cried Visojidha.

"I go with thee," Ndrek replied. "I am tired of shepherding and am of a mind to share thy fortune."

"But," said Visojidha, "what of thy father and mother?"

"They can shift for themselves," answered Ndrek.
"I have had enough of them."

So, though Visojidha had no wish for his company, they fared on together. As often as they came to a new country Visojidha would seek out a town and exhibit his ring and inquire whether it was the workmanship of that land. Till they came at length to the land beyond where the snow lies heavy on the necks of the mountains, where a goldsmith to whom he showed it said, "This ring I know, for I myself made it many years ago."

Asked Visojidha, "Whose is the name engraved on it?"

The man replied, "There is but one man in this country who bears that name, and that is our King."

Visojidha asked him, "Where is he to be found?"

The goldsmith answered, "In the capital, which is three days' journey from here."

So they set out, and on the third day they came in sight of the city, which was built on the edge of a great plain. There they sat down on the high bank of a stream to eat bread, and Ndrek said, "Do thou go down and fetch some water for us to drink."

Visojidha did so, but as he turned to climb up the bank, lo, Ndrek stood above him with a great boulder lifted in his hands, and said he, "He that is born a cat

must catch the mouse. Give me thy ring, and swear to what I bid thee, or this stone shall split thy skull!"

Asked Visojidha, "To what must I swear?"

Ndrek replied, "From this time on it is I who am the bearer of the ring, and thou art my servant. A cow is tied by the horns, and a man by his word. Swear that to the day of thy death thou wilt not betray me."

Then said Visojidha, "Since to save my life it must be, I so swear." And he gave Ndrek the ring and they went on to the capital.

Now the royal palace stood on a hill in the heart of the city and Ndrek went to its gate and demanded of the soldiers who guarded it that they be taken to the King. When they came before him, he showed him the ring, saying, "O King's Majesty! When I was a babe I was found in a ravine in a southern land with this ring on a cord about my neck. Since it bears thy name, I have made bold to bring it to thee."

When he saw the ring, the King was stricken with remorse. He thought, "I have been guilty before God of the death of that innocent babe! But no one can escape his fate and Heaven intends this lad to be my son!" And he embraced him and gave him quarters in the palace and Ndrek went dressed in silks and brocade with a silver chain over his shoulder and had

a mettled horse to ride and ate costly food, while Visojidha as his servant fetched and carried for him and ate crusts.

But always Ndrek feared lest Visojidha forget his oath and betray him, and at last he bethought himself of a plan. He took to his bed, and refused to eat and drink, pretending sickness, till the King's doctors shook their gray heads over him and the King was greatly troubled. At length he said to the King, "I am very sick. Only one thing will cure me, and that is the juice of a cabbage."

The King answered, "Alas! There is but one place in this land where cabbages grow and that is in the forest of the Lubiya, and no man can get them from her!"

Now the Lubiya of that country was a creature most fierce and dreadful, of woman's shape, tall as a fir tree, with a face as gray as a rock and a body covered with red wool. The forest which she roamed was dense and dark, and her lair, round which grew the cabbages, was halfway to its center, and was knee-deep with the white bones of heroes who had tried to rid the place of her and whom she had devoured as a cat eats locusts. This Ndrek well knew, and said he, "My servant Visojidha has always loved me, and is very clever. If any man can get the cabbage for me, it

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is he. But bid him not return without it, or I shall die."

So the King, out of his great wish to save Ndrek's life, summoned Visojidha and said to him, "Go to-morrow to the forest of the Lubiya and bring one of her cabbages, or I shall have thee hanged."

When he heard this Visojidha went from the King's presence weeping, and lay down on his pallet in despair, for he had no thought but that he would leave his bones in that place. But after a while he slept, and he dreamed that three tall women, with faces as white as chalk and long black hair, stood about him. And said the eldest, "O my sisters, this is the babe who has come, according to our word, to stand in the place of the man who sat by the fire in the southern land of the Toshk. Let us instruct him how to gain the Lubiya's cabbage." The others answered, "Good." Said she then to him, "Thou wilt find the Lubiya devouring a dead horse, but a dagger bird and a bluebottle fly contend with her for it." And the second said to him, "Do thou offer to divide the carcass between the three so that all shall be satisfied." And said the third, "Give the blood to the fly, the entrails to the bird, and the flesh and bones to the Lubiya, but on condition that she give thee one of her cabbages and serve thee the next service thou shalt

ask of her." And having thus spoken, all three faded away.

In the morning Visojidha went to the King and said he, "O King's Majesty, give me a steed to ride and a sharp sword." The King bade that these be given him, and he mounted and rode to the forest. He rode five hours, he rode ten hours, till at last he reached it, and from its depths there arose such a dreadful howling and screeching that he could scarce hear himself think.

He drew his sword and spurred his brave steed straight forward, till, halfway to its center, under the dark trees, he beheld the Lubiya, crouched like a great lynx atop the carcass of a dead nag, while a dagger bird and a bluebottle fly were darting about her head, on which the hair stood up like a porcupine's quills. As often as she bent to set her teeth in the meat, the bird would drive his dagger bill into her haunch and the fly would stab at her eyes, so that she howled in fury and the yellow foam dripped from her jaws.

When she saw Visojidha she spat at him, and yelled she, "Man, what dost thou here? When I have eaten this horse I shall crunch thy bones!"

But he said, "Nay, I am come to do thee a favor. Let me divide the dead horse between you three, and ye shall all be satisfied."

Said she, "What wilt thou ask for it?"

He replied, "Thou shalt give me one of thy cabbages, and do for me the next service I shall ask of thee."

"Well and good," said she, "but make haste, for I am very hungry."

He asked the bird and the fly, "Are ye content?" And when they squawked and buzzed agreement, he dismounted and fell to with his sword and hewed the carcass into fifty pieces. Said he, "O Bird, to thee the entrails. O Fly, to thee the blood. And thou, O Lubiya, shalt have the flesh and bones." At that the dagger bird and the bluebottle fly fell upon the feast with satisfaction, and the Lubiya said, "O Man, I will keep my promise to thee. Take thy cabbage and go, and yet one more service will I serve thee when thou askest it." And she began to gorge upon the meat and bones.

So he cut one of the cabbages and remounted and rode back to the capital rejoicing. He went to the King and said, "O King's Majesty, mayest thou be in health! Here is thy cabbage."

The King was delighted and ordered a broth made of it and took it to the lad Ndrek and made him drink it, and Ndrek hid his anger and pretended that it had cured his sickness.

But in his heart Ndrek pondered how he might bring about Visojidha's destruction. Accordingly, soon after, he lay down again on his bed and would not eat, and to the King he said, "Alas! Sickness has seized me once more, and this time I fear there is no cure for me. For I have fallen in love with the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, and unless I gain her for my wife I shall die, indeed."

Now this Beautiful-of-the-Earth was more lovely than any human woman in the land. She lived in a castle in the very center of the forest of the Lubiya and was guarded by enchantments so powerful that a hundred princes, sons of Kings, though they had outwitted the Lubiya and had won to her castle, had lost their lives trying to gain her. So the King said, "Have not a hundred brave youths tried in vain to gain her? There is no man in my realm clever and strong enough."

Said Ndrek, "Send my servant Visojidha. Did he not bring the cabbage? If any man can win her for me, it will be he."

Accordingly the King summoned Visojidha a second time and said he, "To-morrow go again to the Lubiya's forest and bring the Beautiful-of-the-Earth who lives there. And if thou fail, thou shalt be beaten to death with oaken rods!"

When Visojidha heard this he went from him sorrowful and lay down on his pallet, thinking, "As the saying is, 'The tree gives the ax a handle and the ax cuts down the tree!' Ndrek, who owes his good fortune to me, desires my death, and I shall not return alive!" And he went to sleep weeping salt tears.

But as he slept he dreamed the three tall women again stood about him, and the eldest said to him, "To-morrow ask the King for a thousand lambs, four rams, a hundred donkeys laden with wheat and a hundred with honey, and take them to the forest." Said the second, "There demand of the Lubiya, as the second service she promised thee, that she tell thee how to gain the Beautiful-of-the-Earth." And said the third, "When thou hast gained her, give to the Lubiya one by one the two hundred donkeys for her to devour and thou wilt be able to pass her on thy return." When they had thus spoken, they vanished.

The dream comforted Visojidha, and in the morning when he woke he went to the King and asked for the lambs, the rams, the donkeys, the wheat, and the honey. These the King gave him, and he put his sword in his girdle, mounted his horse, and set out for the forest, leading the train of laden donkeys and driving the rams and lambs before him.

However long the way, at length he arrived there,

and the Lubiya, when she saw the train approaching, reared up like a tree, belching fire from her mouth and yelling with delight. "O Man!" she screeched, "hasten, that I may quickly devour thee and set my teeth in thy animals!"

But said he, "Nay, I am that man whom thou didst promise to serve a second service, and I am come to demand it."

Said she, angrily, "Well, since I gave thee that word, what dost thou desire?"

He replied, "I would gain the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, whose home is in this forest. Tell me how I may do so."

Asked the Lubiya, "What do thy donkeys carry?"

He answered, "Wheat and honey."

Then said she, "Listen well to what I tell thee. When thou comest to her castle thou wilt see a thousand eagles soaring about it. Give to each eagle one of thy sheep. While they are feeding upon them, go forward to its outer gate, which is guarded by two lions, and give to each lion one of thy rams. While they are eating the rams they will let thee pass to the inner gate which is guarded likewise by two lions. Give to them thy two remaining rams and they also will let thee by. In the courtyard thou wilt see many ants and bees. Scatter thy wheat and pour out thy

honey there on the ground for them. With the help of her birds, her beasts, and her insects, thou mayest be able to bring away the Beautiful-of-the-Earth. But when thou enterest her castle, fail not to sweep the door and the walls, else they will do thee a mischief, for they are no less her servants than the rest. Now get thee gone upon thine errand, else I may forget my promise and devour thee straightway!" And she gritted her teeth with rage and hunger, while Visojidha hastened on farther into the forest, leading his train of donkeys and driving his rams and lambs before him.

So at length, in its very center, he came to the castle of the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, built all of white stone with golden tiles, and it was scarce to be seen for the cloud of fierce eagles that were flying about it. He tethered his donkeys and his four rams and drove on his flock of lambs till he was come near, when he shouted, "O ye Eagles! I have brought you a gift, no less than a fat lamb for each one of you. Take them, therefore, and remember me in kindness!" And the eagles swooped down and each snatched up a lamb in its talons and winged away to eat it.

Taking his four rams, and leading his train of donkeys, he rode on to the outer gate, where two huge tawny lions ramped and roared at him. Said he, "O

Lions, I bring you each a ram. Take them and remember me in kindness." And they pounced upon two of the rams and began to devour them and let him enter.

In the same manner he passed the inner gate, giving the two rams that remained to the lions that guarded it, and so came with his train of donkeys into the courtyard, which was filled with sweet-smelling shrubs, and there he dismounted and scattered the wheat and poured the honey the donkeys carried on the ground, saying, "O ye Bees and Ants! I bring you wheat and honey as a gift. Take them and remember me in kindness." And the bees buzzed from the shrubs and the ants swarmed from the ground, and began to feast upon them.

Then, mindful of the Lubiya's warning, Visojidha cut twigs from the shrubs and with his girdle bound them together into a broom and going to the castle door began to sweep it, and no sooner was it clean than it opened to him and he entered, finding himself in a room whose walls were of silver. With his broom he swept these also and when he had thus cleaned them a door in one wall opened and he passed through it into a room of gold, with hangings of crimson damask. In its corner, in an iron cage, was a great leopard, which clawed the bars and screamed at him, and before it, sitting on a golden chair, he beheld the

Beautiful-of-the-Earth, with eleven lovely girls fanning her with fans of peacock feathers. She was more lovely, however, than all of them put together, more beautiful than could be painted in a picture or written in a song.

When they saw him, her eleven companions cried out in fear, and she sprang up in rage, exclaiming, "How hast thou, a man, come here?"

Said Visojidha, "By little and little. I have come to take thee from the forest."

At that she ran into her silver room and cried, "O my walls and doors! Why have ye not fallen upon him and crushed him?"

They answered, "In all the while we have served thee never didst thou sweep us, but he has swept us clean!"

She ran outside and cried, "O my Bees and Ants! Why have ye failed to sting him and drive him away?"

They replied, "Thou hast never given us more than dirty water and crumbs of mouldy bread, while he has given us fresh wheat and honey."

She ran then to the gates and screamed, "O my Lions! Why did ye not rend him when he tried to enter?"

Said they, "Thou hast thrown us now and then

bits of stale meat and little enough of that, while he has given us live rams!"

Lastly she shouted to the eagles, "O my swift Eagles! Why have ye let him come near my gates?"

And they said to her, "Why should we not? Thou hast always left us to gain our food as we might. He has given us young and tender lambs!"

Then said she to Visojidha, "He who wins me from my palace must perform three tasks which I shall set him. And if he fail in any one of them he shall be torn by my leopard. Hast thou courage enough to try them?"

He replied, "Yes."

Said she, "Forty princes have won thus far and all of them my leopard has torn in pieces and their bodies have been devoured by my lions. Try not what thou canst not accomplish, but go. For thou art a handsome boy and I would spare thee."

But he answered, "I will not leave here without thee."

At that she said to her maidens, "Bring eleven pailfuls of wheat and eleven pailfuls of poppy seed and heap them together in the courtyard."

They did so, and she led him there and said, "It is now sunset. Before sunrise thou shalt separate these grains one from the other into two piles, without a

light. And see thou make no error, even by so much as a single grain!" So saying, she left him there and withdrew into her golden room with her eleven maidens.

When Visojidha saw the great heap, with each grain of wheat no bigger than a louse, and each poppy seed smaller than the head of a pin, he said to himself in despair, "The task she has set me is impossible, and her leopard will tear me in shreds!" But by the last rays of the sun he beheld the army of ants swarming from their holes in the ground and falling upon the pile, carrying the wheat to one side and the poppy seed to another, and he lay down content and went to sleep.

At daybreak he awoke, and lo, there were two piles, one of wheat and one of poppy seed, nor was there a single grain out of its place.

When the Beautiful-of-the-Earth came from her golden room and saw the task completed, she was astonished. Said she, "Thou art no ordinary man! But my next task is harder." And she said to her maidens, "Come with me, and we shall all put on dresses that are alike and veil our faces with veils, and he shall tell which of us is I."

She led them away to robe themselves, and presently they came forth, each as like to another as to

her reflection in a mirror, so that Visojidha's heart sank, and he said to himself, "Alas! No man could do it, and her lions will gnaw my bones!"

As he thought thus a bee alighted on his sleeve, and he whispered to it, "O little Bee, to whom I brought the honey! Bid thy comrades creep under the veils and tell me which she is!"

The bee buzzed "*bz-z-z-z-z*" and vanished and presently came back with eleven more. Each crept under a veil, and in a moment all flew away but one, which rested on the head of one of the twelve, when Visojidha sprang forward and touched her, saying, "Thou art the one!"

All unveiled their faces then, and the one he had touched was indeed the Beautiful-of-the-Earth. Exclaimed she, "Thou hast won further than any other hath done! But my third and last task thou wilt not accomplish, no, never! Across forty rivers and forty valleys are the Moving Mountains, that open and shut each midday. Within the opening is the spring of the water-of-life. Take this phial and bring it to me within three days filled with the water."

So saying she gave him a crystal phial and said she, "If thou come back without the water, thou shalt have no mercy from me!"

Visojidha took the phial and put it in his breast

and led his horse from the castle, exclaiming, "Who knows where the Moving Mountains are to be found, and how can I search them out in three days?" And he sat down on the ground outside the outer gate in hopelessness.

But as he sat, lo, the thousand eagles ceased their circling, and flying down to him, drew together, interlocking their wings so that they were like a carpet. Said he to himself, "They mean to bear me there!" And he seated himself on the feathered carpet and they soared with him into the air and flew with him so swiftly that his ears smoked. A day and a half they flew, setting him down just at midday, before two tall mountains that leaned together, and hardly had he put foot to ground than the mountains opened with a *bumbulim* of thunder.

He took the phial from his breast and ran into the chasm, where he found a spring of water as white as goats' milk. He filled the phial from it and ran back—the mountains closing so quickly that they took the heel from his boot—and mounted the eagle carpet, that soared into the sky and bore him in another day and a half to the castle in the Lubiya's forest where it set him down before the outer gate.

He entered the castle and in the golden room found the Beautiful-of-the-Earth feasting with her maidens.

When she saw the phial filled with the milk-white water-of-life she wept, and all the others wept with her. Said she, "Fate has ordained that I go with him, and there is no help for it!" And she put on a silver robe with a crimson girdle, and he set her before him on his horse and rode away through the dark forest, leading his train of donkeys.

Thus he came halfway to its edge, where the Lubiya sat on her haunches.

Snarled she, "Well, thou hast gained the Beautiful of-the-Earth, and I have kept my word with thee! But though I promised to aid thee thus far, I made no promise of more. Now I shall eat you both, and after you thy donkeys!" And she rushed to devour them.

But he spurred his steed, and drove the donkeys before him at all speed, with the Lubiya screeching and scrambling after. So for a time he kept ahead, and when she caught up with him he cut loose the rearmost donkey with his sword. Being very hungry she stopped to eat it, while he fled on. Again she overtook him and he cut loose a second donkey, and this he did with all the two hundred, one after the other, and while she was devouring the last, he came out onto the open plain, where the Lubiya could not follow him, with the Beautiful-of-the-Earth safe in his arms.

So he rode back to the capital, and so great was her beauty that the people crowded the streets to gaze at her. He rode to the palace and brought her to the King, and the King rejoiced and led her to Ndrek, to whom he said, "Now thou wilt be well again, and to-morrow thou shalt wed her."

But Visojidha had fallen so deep in love with the Beautiful-of-the-Earth that he could scarce set one foot before another. He went to his poor pallet in the servants' quarters and lay down with his sword under his pillow, weeping that his oath forbade his declaring the truth to the King and that the rascal Ndrek was to possess her.

As for Ndrek, he said to himself, "Though I have the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, I shall never be safe while Visojidha is alive. Sooner or later he will betray me!" And he called one of his favorites and gave him a purse of gold, and said he, "Go to my servant Visojidha, and kill him, for he is my enemy. And thou shalt be my best friend forever."

Accordingly, the other took a dagger and crept into the room where Visojidha lay sleeping and woke him. Said he, "This I bring thee from Ndrek!" And with the words he stabbed him through the heart, so that his breath stopped and he died. Then the favorite went to Ndrek, where he and the King sat at

supper with the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, and said to him, "Thy servant Visojidha has been stabbed to death, no doubt in some quarrel with one of his fellows."

When she heard this the Beautiful-of-the-Earth turned pale, for in her heart she had fallen in love with Visojidha, and disliked the crafty Ndrek. Said she, "Is not that the name of him who brought me from the forest?"

The King replied, "It is the same."

Said she, "I will not believe that the man who vanquished me and my magic and outwitted the Lubiya has been slain with a common dagger!"

Said the favorite, "Nevertheless it is true. I have just seen his body."

She answered, "I will believe it only when I have seen it also."

So all four of them went to the room where Visojidha's body lay on his pallet.

But when she saw him, she drew from her sleeve the phial which held the water-of-life, and poured it into his mouth, and instantly the dagger-wound grew together and he sprang up alive. And seeing them about him, and the bloody pallet, he knew what had happened, and he snatched his sword from under his pillow and struck a blow that smote the murderer's

head from his body. Said he to Ndrek, "I swore to thee that I would not betray thee to the day of my death, but now I am free from my oath."

Then he told the King the whole story, and the King summoned his soldiers and they dragged the cowardly Ndrek to a place outside the city wall where four trees were growing. They tied ropes to their tops and bent them together, and binding him to them by his hands and feet, they let them fly asunder so that he was torn to pieces.

As for Visojidha, he married the Beautiful-of-the-Earth himself, and he sent for his foster parents, and the King made him his son and he ruled that land after him.

*Now this is my tale and my tale is done.
Health to us, all of us, everyone!*



THE BOY WHO STOLE THE NIGHTINGALE THAT WAS CALLED GIZARI

ONCE—however it came about, let it be as it may!—there was a King of this Land-of-the-Eagles who died, leaving three sons to rule the kingdom together after him. The first was named Imer, the second was named Marash, and the third was named Rasim.

After they had buried him and mourned for him properly Imer, the eldest, said to the others, "Our father was a great king and built many palaces and mosques for the worship of God. We should walk in his footsteps. I, being the eldest son, shall build a mosque more splendid than the largest of his, in which only I may kneel to pray, so that all men shall know my nobleness."

Accordingly he took a half of all the gold his father had left to him as his share, and summoned the greatest architects and built a mosque of tile, with a minaret taller than any in the capital, and spread on its floor a costly silken carpet, and over its door he placed a golden tablet on which was engraved, "None may pray here but I, Imer the Great."

Now the fame of the mosque and its richness went abroad, and each day, as he knelt alone on its splendid carpet, Imer grew more prideful. But the kings of neighboring countries, who journeyed there to see it, when they read the tablet over its door, went away smiling.

One day when he went there he saw standing before it an aged Dervish with a long white beard and a green turban. Said he to the stranger, "What thinkest thou of this mosque which I have built? Surely there

can be none to compare with it in the white world."

The Dervish, however, combing his long beard with his fingers, made no reply, so that Imer said, "It is difficult, no doubt, for thee to find words to express thy admiration. Nevertheless, do thy best and it will not displease me." But still the Dervish remained silent.

Then Imer was filled with anger, and cried he, "Say in one word whether this mosque is not the most glorious of all in any land beneath the sun!"

Said the Dervish then, "It lacks one thing, without which it will never be perfect." And with the words he departed.

Imer went to the palace in an ill-humor, saying to himself, "The Dervish is a donkey!" But remembering how the kings who had seen the mosque had gone away smiling, he thought, "Perhaps, indeed, it does lack something of perfection, which they noticed." And day by day his dissatisfaction grew, till at last he pulled it down to its foundation stones and threw the tiles of which it had been built into the river.

When his brothers saw the mosque in ruins, they asked him, "Why hast thou done this?" He replied, "It lacked something, though I know not what."

Then Marash, the second of the three, said, "In

my turn I shall build a mosque." And he spent three quarters of the gold his father had left him for materials and built one of gray stone that was even larger and handsomer than Imer's had been. It had carved doorways and crimson curtains, and over its entrance was inscribed, "Only Beys of noble birth may pray in this mosque of Marash." So splendid was it that nobles of the whole countryside came to kneel in it. The common people, however, when they learned the meaning of the characters written over its entrance, made a mock of it and threw fish-heads in the street before it. But Marash took great pride in it and said a prayer in it every day.

One afternoon, as he was about to enter its door, he saw on the threshold the white-bearded Dervish with the green turban. Said he, "Men call this mosque of mine the finest in any land. Thinkest thou not they speak truly?"

The Dervish, however, cast his eyes upward and said nothing. Then Marash said to him, "Canst thou not speak? Is there any more splendid on the earth?" But to this also the stranger was silent. So that Marash, angered, exclaimed, "Thou tongueless dolt! Answer me, or it will go hard with thee!"

Then the Dervish said, "One thing thy mosque lacks, without which it can never be perfect." And

with the words he mingled with the crowd of the street.

Marash went to the palace in rage, thinking, "What does the ignorant lout know of real splendor?" But as he thought, he remembered the fish-heads, and said to himself, "Can it be that the Dervish is right, and that there is in fact something missing in the structure that even common people have perceived?" The more he reflected, the more dissatisfied he grew, till in the end he had the building pulled down, so that not one stone was left upon another.

When his brothers Imer and Rasim saw what he had done, they questioned him and he replied that, beautiful as it was, it missed the perfection he had desired and no longer pleased him.

Then said Rasim, the youngest, "It is my turn now to build one." And he took all the fortune his father had left to him and bought white marble, and built of it a mosque neither large nor small, but as lovely as a white flower, over whose entrance was engraved these words: "Let all who will enter freely to pray with Rasim."

Now though the building was not of great size, it was so beautiful that folk talked of it more than they had talked of both the others put together, and there was no day when visitors from afar did not come to

see it. The inscription over its doorway pleased noble and humble, rich and poor, and all who prayed in it praised its builder's wisdom and modesty.

One evening, as Rasim rose from his prayer, he saw standing in its doorway the old Dervish of the white beard and green turban, and he said to him, "I am the builder of this mosque and I desire it to be a thing unsurpassed. Has it, in thine eyes, any lack which I may make good?"

Twice he repeated the words and the Dervish made no reply. The third time, however, he answered, "It lacks one single thing, without which it cannot be perfect."

Said Rasim, then, "Glory to thy tongue! I pray thee tell me what it is, that I may supply it."

The Dervish answered, "It is the nightingale called Gizari. If thou hadst her to sing in it, there would indeed be none other such a mosque in the white world."

Asked Rasim, "Where is that nightingale to be found?"

The Dervish replied, "That I cannot tell thee. I only know that its song is the most beautiful that man's ear has ever heard."

Rasim went to his brothers Imer and Marash and told them what the Dervish had said. Exclaimed

Imer, "Insolent rascal! Why did he not tell me?" And cried Marash, "He might have told me as well! If he shows his face again he shall lose his ears!" But Rasim said, "Let us start out together in search of the nightingale Gizari, and if we find her, when she is singing in the mosque we shall know that by our mutual efforts it has reached perfection and God will favor us equally. And, since we are the sons of a King and it does not become us to fail, let us swear that we will not return without her."

The other two agreed to this and they bade their ministers rule wisely during their absence, and set out on the road, asking every traveler they met if he knew where the bird was to be found. But each of them answered, "Though we have listened to many tales of this and that, of the nightingale called Gizari we have never heard."

Now when they had journeyed thus for twenty days they came one morning to a place where stood a white stone, where the road forked into three trails, and Rasim said, "Let us separate here and each take a different trail. And let the one who finds the nightingale return here and go in search of the others."

This seemed good to the rest and they kissed one another, saying, "Mayest thou go on a smooth road!" and set out, each in a different direction.

The trail which Imer, the eldest, took led to the north, and he went as far as he went till he grew tired. Said he to himself, "Of what use is it to plod forever up one side of a mountain and down the other, searching for what may not be anywhere? For how do we know but that the Dervish lied? I will wager he never heard of a nightingale called *Gizari*!" But he dreaded to return to his home lest he be shamed by the breaking of his oath, and coming to a pleasant town nestled in a fruitful valley, he apprenticed himself to a barber, and made his living by shaving men's heads.

Marash's trail pointed southward, and he went as far as he went till he also became weary of the journeying. Said he to himself, "One may trudge this trail to the very end of the earth without finding the cursed bird!" And he, too, remembered the oath he had sworn and dreaded to return, and coming to a prosperous city on the bank of a river, he opened a coffee stall in its bazaar and made his livelihood by selling coffee to the merchants and tradesmen.

So Imer and Marash, having no heart for the toil of the way, gave over the search and each looked after his own affairs. As for Rasim, the youngest, however, he followed his trail, which led to the eastward, for three months, till he came to a land that was wild and desolate, in the midst of savage mountains, where was

neither farm nor roadhouse nor dwelling, but only rough rocks and fir trees.

As he threaded these wastes he came one morning to a woman, clad only in a robe of twisted tree bark, who was combing her tangled hair with a stick. Pitying her condition, he took his comb from his girdle bag and combed her hair for her, cleaning it of the dust and leaves it had gathered, at which she was greatly pleased. Said she, "O Stranger, never have I seen a thing like that. What is its name?"

"It is called a comb," he answered. "If thou wilt I will give it to thee."

Said she, "Folk do not give for nothing, and what have I to offer thee in exchange?"

He replied, "Thou hast only to answer a question."

She asked, "What is thy question?" and he said, "I am in search of the nightingale called Gizari. In thy wanderings among these mountains hast thou ever heard of her?"

"Never," she answered. "Thou wilt not find her in these parts, where is nothing but rocks and trees. Go back the way thou camest, for beyond here the land is ruled by wild beasts. Even I dare not go there."

"Nevertheless," said he, "I must follow my search."

Then said she, "In return for thy comb, I will tell thee one thing. The next mountain is ruled by a Leopard as huge as an ox. Thou canst pass his domain only by gaining favor of his wife. Thou must speak with her, however, before noon, at which time he returns to his house. If he is there when thou reachest it he will devour thee in three mouthfuls."

Said he, "I shall live or die as God pleases." And bidding her farewell, he went on to the mountain.

It still lacked an hour to noon when he smelled the leopard smell and soon after he came to the Leopard's house, which was built of rocks. Smoke was pouring from its chimney, and looking through its window he saw the Leopard's wife making bread. He knocked at the door and when she opened it she saw him with astonishment.

"What!" she exclaimed. "Art thou a man?"

He replied, "Yes."

Said she, "I have not seen a man since twenty years ago when the Leopard stole me away and brought me here to be his wife. Hasten back the way thou camest, for when he comes he will devour thee!"

Said Rasím, "Let him do what he will with me." And he sat down and watched her make the bread. When she had kneaded the dough and shaped it into loaves, ready to be baked, she opened the door of

the stove to sweep the ashes from the hot coals, and he saw that she was sweeping them with her breasts. He bade her wait, and going outside the house, cut some twigs and bound them with his girdle into a broom and with this he swept the fire for her. She was delighted at this. Said she, "Whenever I bake bread for the Leopard I burn my breasts and am abed for ten days afterward! Now I need do so no more."

When the bread was done she broke a loaf and gave him some, and while he was eating it there sounded a dreadful scream from the mountainside. "That is my husband returning!" she exclaimed, and opening the door of the cupboard, she bade him hide in it.

Scarce had he concealed himself when in came the Leopard, with his claws stretching and his neck hairs bristling—so huge that his shoulders brushed the top of the doorway. Growled he, angrily, "Wife, why hast thou not baked my bread?"

She replied, "I have baked it."

Said he, "How, then, do I find thee on thy feet? Always after the bread-baking thou art ill and unable to rise from thy bed."

She answered, "I have found a way to do it without burning myself." And she set a loaf before him, which he ate, saying, "It is better than the last batch and does not taste of ashes."

Then she asked him, "If I should tell thee that a man had shown me how to bake it thus, wouldst thou eat him?"

"No," he replied. "I would kiss him on the forehead and make him my brother."

When she heard this, she brought Rasim from the cupboard. "Here is the one who showed me," she told him. And the Leopard kissed him on the forehead and asked he, "O my brother, what has brought thee here?"

Said Rasim, "I have built a mosque to the glory of God, but it lacks one thing to make it perfect, and that is the nightingale that is called Gizari. I have searched over a hundred mountains and valleys and still have not found her."

The Leopard answered, "I have heard of her, though I cannot tell thee where she is. My father, the Lion, who rules the next mountain to this, may know, but if he sees thee he will devour thee in two mouthfuls. The only way thou canst find out is through his wife."

"How may I gain favor with her?" asked Rasim.

Said the Leopard, "Thou canst see her only at midafternoon, while the Lion is asleep, when she sits on the doorstep sunning herself. She is a hundred years old and her eyelids cover her eyes like a hat so

that she cannot see, but her ears are so keen that she can hear the twitch of a mouse's whisker. So speak to her while thou art still some distance away, before she hears thy step and wakes the Lion to rend thee. Say to her, 'The brother of thy husband's son, the Leopard, greets thee,' and she will receive thee in kindness."

Rasim thanked the Leopard and bade them farewell and went on his way to the next mountain. He walked one hour, he walked two hours, and at length he smelted the lion smell and presently came in sight of the Lion's house, where the Lion's wife sat on the doorstep dozing in the sun. Mindful of the Leopard's warning he stepped as softly as he could, but while he was still a long way off a twig broke under his foot, and she lifted her head. At that he spoke, saying, "O Mother, the brother of thy husband's son, the Leopard, greets thee."

Said she, "Come close and let me see thee."

So he came to her and lifted her eyelids so that she could see him, when she exclaimed, "There is truth in thy face! But thou art a man. What dost thou here, where I have seen no man these many years, since the Lion stole me from my home to be his wife?"

He told her of his search, and she said, "My husband, in truth, knows the nightingale's whereabouts,

but the only way I can find out his secrets is by leading him to talk in his sleep."

Just then the Lion, hearing their voices through his slumber, rumbled, "Wife! What sound do I hear?"

She replied, "My dear husband, it is only the wind blowing through the trees."

Said he, "To-morrow I will cut them down!" and turning over, began to snore like twenty wild boars.

Presently she said to Rasim, "Whistle." He did so, and the Lion, hearing in his dream, grunted, "Wife, I hear a sound like a bird singing."

She answered, "Dear husband, it comes over the tree tops. Can it be the song of the nightingale Gizar?"

"Nay," he said, "the land of Queen Bôr, where she is, is too far away for us to hear her."

"It is, then, a cricket chirping," said she, and again he turned over and went to sleep, snarking and snoring like the *bumbullim* of summer thunder.

Then said she to Rasim, "The land of Queen Bôr is to the eastward, on the other side of the Valley of Eagles. But it is perilous to cross, for the eagles that rule it are exceedingly fierce, with beaks and claws of iron that will tear thee in pieces. Thou canst cross it only by night, when they cannot see thee."

"While I have my sword," Rasim answered, "they

shall not bar me!" And he thanked her and went his way to the valley below. He reached its edge at sunset, and being weary, wrapped himself in his cloak and lay down to sleep beneath a tree. He was awakened at dawn by a chirping above his head, and looking up saw a snake coiled in the tree, about to seize three young eaglets in their nest. He took his girdle knife between his teeth and climbing the tree, killed the snake and threw its body to the ground. Scarce had he descended when a great gray eagle came flying, and alighting beside him, threw off its eagle feathers and became transformed into a woman dressed in a gray robe with a feather headdress.

Said she, "Sir, I thank thee. But for thy blade yonder loathsome serpent would have devoured my fledglings. But what dost thou here, where a man may not come?"

He replied, "I journey to the land of Queen Bôr."

"Thou art on the right trail," said she, "but it is seven days' travel from here, and to reach it thou wilt need the aid of my three sisters. Go straight forward and thou wilt find their house, thatched with eagle feathers, in the center of the valley." Then she took a feather from her headdress and gave it to him. "Show them this and they will aid thee," she said; "but guard thyself well meanwhile."

He thanked her and putting the feather in his girdle, went on across the valley. One day he went, two days he went, and on the third day, as he sat by a stream resting, three fierce eagles darted upon him, screaming and tearing at him with iron beaks and claws. But he drew his sword and fought so strongly that the sharp blade wounded all three, one in the leg, one in the wing, and one in the breast, so that they lay bleeding and helpless.

He sheathed his sword and went on, but before he had gone far pity seized him, and he went back and brought water from the stream, and stripping off his shirt of fine linen, tore it into three pieces and washed and bound up their wounds before he went on.

Whether he went a short way or a long way, he came at length to the house thatched with eagle feathers. The door stood wide and when no one answered his knock he entered and found therein three beds, each with a coverlet of eagle's down, and a table set with three plates, knives, and spoons and a pitcher of water. While he looked about him, he heard the rustling of wings and three gray eagles flew down before the door and throwing off their eagle feathers became transformed into women, wearing gray robes and feather headdresses, and each bore a bandage of

white linen, one on her leg, one on her arm, and one on her breast.

They entered, and seeing him, turned pale. But he said to them, "Have no fear," and showing them the feather from his girdle, said, "By this sign I claim your aid." Said they, "It is our sister's. Forgive us that we assailed thee, not knowing thee for her friend." And taking up the pitcher from the table each in turn poured water upon her wound and when they stripped off their bandages the flesh showed no sign of hurt. He related to them how he had saved the three eaglets from the snake, and they exclaimed, "They are our three dear little nephews, and we are beholden to thee. How may we aid thee?"

He replied, "I journey to the land of Queen Bôr."

Said they, "Her capital is three days' travel from here. Stay here with us till to-morrow and we will guide thee and give thee protection on thy trail."

He stayed gladly with them that night, and next morning they donned their eagle feathers and he set out, they flying before him by day and by night circling above him while he slept, till he came within sight of the capital of Queen Bôr. There they flew down and gave him each a feather, saying, "Shouldst thou need our further aid, come to this spot and burn these and we will hasten to thee."

So saying they winged away and he entered the capital, finding it a noble city of towers and gardens. In its center was the Queen's palace and he chose an inn which overlooked its garden and rested there from his long journey.

That evening at dusk as he sat in the inn, he heard a sound so beautiful that he was ravished by it, and said he to the landlord, "What is that?" The man answered, "That is our young Queen's nightingale singing. Each day at this hour she walks with her maidens in the palace garden, where the cage of the nightingale is hung in its pavilion."

Now about the garden was a high wall and when the dark deepened Rasim went there, and tying a stone in the end of his girdle, threw it over the wall and climbed to its top, and thus he beheld the young Queen Bôr—who was so named from her snow-white complexion, the word Bôr meaning snow in that land—strolling among the fruit trees. She was so beautiful that he held his breath to see her, and at first sight he felt his heart fly out of his breast for love of her. Said he to himself, "How can I think to rob her I love of her nightingale? Yet I am bound by mine oath to do so!"

The next day, at twilight, he climbed the wall and presently Queen Bôr came with her maidens from the

palace and hanging the nightingale's cage in the pavilion, sat down on the grass beneath a pomegranate tree, while the rest wandered about, plucking and eating the luscious fruits. After a time he heard one say, "The Queen sleeps. Let us go further away so that we shall not waken her with our chatter." And they went into the depths of the garden.

Then Rasim, making no noise, leaped down from the wall, and stealing to the pavilion, stretched forth his hand to the cage, and when he touched it the nightingale burst into sweeter song than ever. But he saw the Queen lying asleep so near, and her beauty drew him like a rope, so that he turned from the cage, and bent over her and kissed her cheek. Instantly, however, she stirred, and seeing that she was about to waken he made haste to climb the wall and leaped down on the other side.

Waking, Queen Bôr called her maidens, and said to them, "Go and look in the pavilion and see if my nightingale Gizari is safe." They hastened to look, and returning, told her, "She sits on her perch, eating caraway seed." Said the Queen, "I dreamed a man came to steal her away."

She rose then, and taking the cage from the pavilion, carried it into the palace, thinking, "The dream has frightened me, for my heart beats strangely."

As for Rasím he went back to the inn angered at himself for having failed in his purpose.

The next evening he again climbed the wall, and again the Queen came from the palace with her maidens, and hanging the cage of the nightingale in the pavilion, said to them, "Let us play at ball." This they did till she said, "I am tired and will rest awhile," and they wandered to the further depths of the garden while she lay down on the grass and fell asleep. And again Rasím, watching, leaped down from the wall and crept to the pavilion to steal the nightingale. But a second time, when he passed the Queen and saw her loveliness as she slept, her beauty overcame him and he leaned and kissed her on the mouth. But at that she stirred, and seeing that she was about to wake, he ran to the wall and escaped as on the night before.

Waking, the Queen called her maidens and bade them look in the pavilion and see if the nightingale was safe. Again they returned and told her, "She bathes in her golden bowl." And again she said, "I dreamed a man came to steal her away." And she carried the cage into the palace, saying to herself, "There was more to my dream, that has gone from me, but it has made my heart beat even more strangely than it did yesterday."

Rasim went back to his inn more angered at himself that he had failed a second time in his purpose, and thinking, "With the Queen in my sight I shall never be able to steal the nightingale from her, no, never!" And he lay all that night hopeless and grieving.

The next day, however, he remembered the eagles. He went outside the city to the place where the three eagles had parted from him, and striking fire from his flint and steel, burned the three feathers they had given him.

He waited an hour, he waited two hours, and three hours, and at dusk the eagles flew down from the sky to him and threw off their eagle feathers. Said they, "O our friend! Long life to thee! What is thy need?"

He answered, "Glory to your wings! I came hither to steal from Queen Bôr her nightingale that is called Gizari, but alas! I have fallen deeper than the deep sea in love with her, and my heart fails me!"

Said they, "It will be easy for us to do it for thee, since it sings each evening in the pavilion of the royal garden." And they bade him not to reenter the city, but to make his way to their house in the Valley-of-Eagles. So saying, they donned their feathers and springing into the air, winged swiftly to the city. There they hovered high over the garden of the palace

till the Queen had fallen asleep and her maidens wandered away, when they swooped down, and snatching the cage from the pavilion, sped away with it in their talons through the upper air to the house that was thatched with eagle feathers. There at length Rasim arrived, and the nightingale, when she saw him, burst into such song that all the buds on the bushes opened.

Next day the eagles flew with him to the edge of the valley, where they bade him farewell, and he took the backward trail over the mountains, carrying the cage, with the nightingale singing all the way.

He passed the spot where he had killed the snake, and the gray eagle flew down from her nest and threw off her eagle feathers to greet him. He told her of his meeting with her sisters and the aid they had given him, and she said, "Well I knew thou wouldest not fail. Good luck and long life to thee!"

He came at mid-afternoon to the mountain of the Lion, whose wife he found sitting on the doorstep sunning herself. While still a long way off he covered the nightingale's cage with his cloak so that it should not sing, and greeted her as before. And said she, when he had lifted her eyelids so that she could see his face, "Well I knew thou wouldest succeed! A smooth trail to thee!"

Now as before the Lion heard their voices in his sleep, and rumbled, "O Wife! What is the sound I hear?" She answered, "My dear husband, what if it were a man for thee to eat?" Said he, "Cease thy jesting with me when I am sleeping!" And he turned over and began to snore like an avalanche.

Rasím went on to the next mountain, where the Leopard and his wife greeted him in friendship. Said the Leopard, "Well I knew thou wouldest gain the nightingale, O my brother!" And both wished him a fair journey.

Lastly he came to the barren waste of rocks and trees, where he found the wild woman, in her robe of twisted bark, combing her hair with the comb he had given her. Said she, "So thou hast found the nightingale! What wilt thou do with her?"

He replied, "I shall hang her in my mosque and she shall sing while I say my prayers."

Said she, "Well, good luck and long life to thee! Say a prayer for me that I may not break my comb."

Now whether he journeyed a short while or a long while, Rasím came at last to the place of the white stone, where the road forked and where he had parted from his two brothers, and according to their agreement, he set out to find them.

First, he took the northern trail that Imer, his

eldest brother, had followed, making inquiry of all he met. So at length he came to the town in which Imer had settled, and seeing a barber's shop, thought, "I will have my head shaved." He hung the cage of the nightingale covered by his cloak in its doorway and entered, and lo, the barber was his brother.

They embraced and kissed one another and when he had exhibited the nightingale, Rasim said, "Do thou dispose of thy business and when we have found our brother Marash, let us go back to our own land and to our proper place."

That same day, therefore, Imer sold his shop and both returned together to the place of the white stone, and set out on the trail to the southward, inquiring of all they met. In time they came to the city on the river bank where Marash had settled. They searched it one day, they searched it two days, and on the third day they sat down before a coffee stall, and lo, the man who served them was the one they sought.

All three embraced and kissed each other, and Rasim said to Marash, "Do thou get rid of thy business, for now we can all return with good hearts to our home." This was done, and next day they started back to their capital.

Now Imer and Marash were ashamed that Rasim had found them in such low employment. When they

thought of the fame he would gain for finding the nightingale they were envious and before they had gone ten leagues they hated him. Said Imer secretly to Marash, "Who is he that he should be counted above us?" And Marash answered, "We are the two eldest. Let us so arrange that he shall not trouble us."

So they formed a plan, and when they came to the border of their land they fell upon Rasim and bound and gagged him, smearing his face with clay so that none should know him. When they reached the capital they had him thrown into a windowless dungeon, over which they set a guard of soldiers, giving out that he was a robber, who had attacked them on the road. To their ministers they said, "After terrible hardships and many perils we two have brought the nightingale Gizari. Our brother Rasim, however, while we were in a distant country, was drowned in a mountain stream." So they sat on their thrones again and ruled, and they hung the cage of the nightingale in the mosque of white marble, and folk came from the most distant countries to hear her, and carried the fame of the mosque over the white world.

Thus it was with them. But as for Queen Bôr, when she woke and found that the nightingale had vanished from the pavilion, she was dismayed. She summoned her guard, who searched every bush of the garden,

and when the bird could not be found, she sent criers throughout her whole realm, offering a great reward. At last she despatched messengers to many neighbouring countries, bidding them bring her word of any bird which might be her lost treasure.

At the end of a year one of these returned and said, "O Queen's Majesty! In the furthest land to which I journeyed, I heard tell of a singing bird in a land still more distant, which is kept in the chief mosque of its capital. While I could not learn by what name it is called, it was said that folk came from near and far to hear it, and by reason of its song the mosque was counted the most famous in the white world."

Exclaimed she, "That is my nightingale!" and she bade raise a great army, and armed and provisioned it, and putting herself at its head, marched to attack the land of the two Princes, sending heralds in advance to summon them to prepare for the battle.

Now when Imer and Marash learned that a great host was advancing to lay waste their land and capital, they summoned their ministers and asked them, "Why should this be?" The Prime Minister answered, "It has reached us that the Queen who leads the host lays claim to the nightingale Gizari, whose song has made the city's mosque of marble the most famous in the white world."

At this the pair were in great fear. Said they to one another, "Our troops cannot withstand the army that is coming. Let us hide away the nightingale and put a common bird in her place, so that when the Queen comes she will be deceived and will return to her own land." They gave the bird to the head of their officers, bidding him conceal her.

Asked he, "Where shall she be put?"

Marash replied, "There is no place so secret and secure as the prison that holds the robber." So the other carried the cage to the windowless dungeon, where Rasim lay grieving at his condition, and thrust it through the door, saying, "Here is a bird to keep thee company!" And at sight of him the nightingale began to sing so sweetly that the prison rats crept from their holes to hear.

As for Imer and Marash, they took a wild thrush and put it in a cage and hung it in the mosque and sent messengers to Queen Bôr to say for them, "Long life to Thy Majesty! Though we know not the purpose of thy coming, we give thee welcome as our royal guest."

In reply she sent them a letter, which said:

"And to you, Prince Imer and Prince Marash, long life! I come to take my nightingale Gizari from your mosque,

and if ye do not surrender it, there shall be bloody war betwixt our armies."

To this they returned a soft answer, saying, "We know nothing of thy nightingale. It is true that a



bird hangs in our mosque, but it is of little value, and if thou desirest it, it is our free gift to thee."

When she read this, Queen Bôr, with her chief officers, rode into the city and to the mosque, and looked at the wild bird in its cage, sitting silent. Said she to them, "This is not my Gizari. But I distrust these princes." And she bade her army encamp out-

side the city walls while she herself entered the palace as guest of Prince Imer and Prince Marash, who feasted and entertained her for seven days.

One evening she said to them, "By your leave I will ride with my officers about your city, that its sights may divert me. For this is the hour when my lost nightingale was used to sing most sweetly, and I am most lonely."

They answered, "We will go with thee," and called for their horses and all set out together. So they rode through the parks and bazaars, till they chanced to skirt the wall of the prison, and suddenly she stopped her horse, and said she, "I hear somewhere a bird singing." Said Imer, "This is the city's prison and no bird can be in it." But she bade all listen and lo, muffled by the walls, the song of the nightingale in the windowless dungeon came to them.

Said she to Imer, "Open the prison gate this instant!" And, trembling, he gave the order. She straightway entered, and bade her officers search, till guided by the song, they burst open the door of the dungeon where Rasim lay in chains, with the jeweled cage beside him and the nightingale singing on its perch.

When she saw that it was indeed her Gizari, she looked at the cowardly brothers with eyes that shot

forth black fire, and Imer, stammering, said, "O Queen, it was not we who stole her, but this man. We knew not the bird was thine till thou camest with thy troops. Then we were ashamed that he should have brought this reproach upon us, and though he is our own younger brother, we had him dragged here."

Asked she of Marash, "Is this true?"

He answered, "Yes. We waited only thy departure to have him hanged, after which we should have sent the bird to thee in thine own land."

She read the lie in their cowardly faces, and said she to her officers, "Take both of them to our camp and hold them there." And when they had gone out she asked Rasim, "Didst thou indeed steal my nightingale?"

He replied, "I am guilty before thee! I had built a mosque to the glory of God, and I desired her singing to make it perfect."

"In the light of thy purpose," she said, "the deed could be forgiven thee. But I well know thou didst not steal her with thine own hand. Wert thou, indeed, in my garden?"

He answered, "Yes. I climbed its wall while thou wert asleep, not once, but twice. But each time at the sight of thy face my heart failed me."

At his words she knew he had fallen in love with

her, and her heart beat as it had done when she had awakened on those two evenings. She suddenly remembered the rest of her dream which she had forgotten, and said she, "What didst thou do when thy heart failed thee? Tell me, that I may know thou art not a liar like thy brothers."

He replied, "I kissed thee."

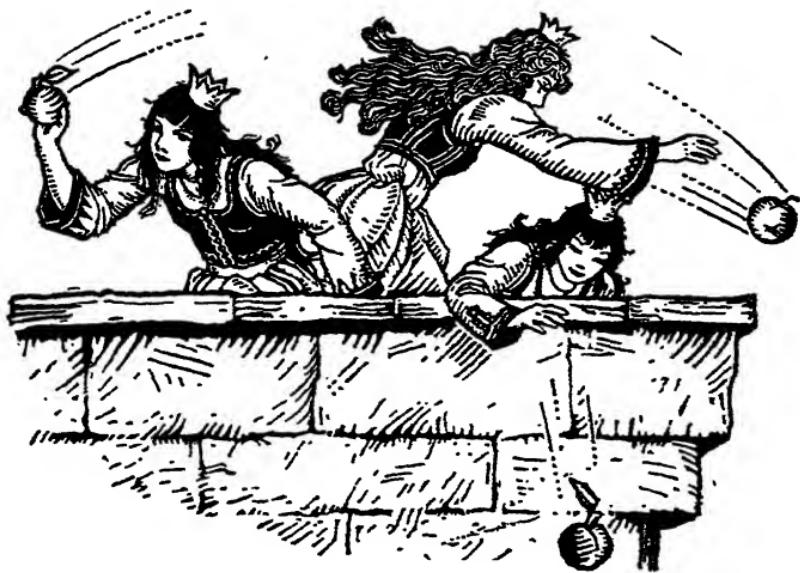
Said she, "Do it again! But beware, for I have sworn that he who kisses me three times shall be my husband."

Then, in joy, he embraced her, and they kissed each other in love, and he told her all his story. And afterward she led her army into the city and took possession of it, and three days later Rasim and she were married, the festival lasting a whole month.

All their lives they lived in happiness together, with the nightingale Gizari to sing to them both, spending one year in his capital and one in hers. As for his brothers, Imer and Marash, they were sent into exile, and Imer went back to his barber shop and Marash to his coffee stall, and neither was ever heard of again.

*They are there and here are we.
Just a tale for me and thee.*

THE GIRL WHO TOOK A SNAKE FOR
HUSBAND



THE GIRL WHO TOOK A SNAKE FOR HUSBAND

THREE WAS (and what a strange thing it was!) in an old time, in a land as far beyond the mountains as a horse can gallop in a year, a King who had three daughters. They were all of an age, and that age was the one for marriage.

It was the custom in that land for all the lads who were unmarried, on a certain day of the year to gather in the streets, while the maidens threw golden apples from the housetops, each marked with the thrower's

name, and he whom an apple struck wedded the one whose name it carried.

On this day, therefore, the three King's daughters threw their golden apples from the palace roof. One of them struck the turban of a Bey's son, another the shoulder of a captain of the King's guard, but the third—which belonged to the Princess Lukja, the youngest and the most beautiful of the three—fell on a woodcutter's cart and struck a spotted snake that lay coiled among the faggots.

When the royal officers who were in charge of the affair brought the two young men before the King, he asked, "Where is the third?" They showed him then the spotted snake, coiled in a wicker basket, saying, "O King's Majesty! The third apple struck no youth, but this snake, and, as is the law, we have brought it to thee."

At that the King rose from his throne in rage. Cried he, "Take it away and kill it! Is my daughter to be given in marriage to a serpent?"

They replied, "It is true that no one has ever known a human maiden to wed a snake, yet our ancient law declares that the fall of the golden apple shall decree the husband of its thrower, who, if she refuse, shall be put to death."

The King summoned his Prime Minister and de-

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manded his opinion. Said the Prime Minister, "O Majesty! This is a great misfortune, but there is no way out, and the Princess must indeed marry the snake or suffer the penalty."

When he heard this the King was greatly troubled. He sent for the Princess Lukja and told her. Said he, "I know not what can be done, for the law of the land is binding on all alike."

She answered, "O my father! My old nurse has told me of a Wise Woman who lives in the forest. She shall take me to her and I will ask her counsel."

The nurse took her to the Wise Woman's hut in the depths of the wood, and when she heard what had occurred the old dame put a kettle of goat's milk over the fire and stirred it with a sprig of mistletoe till it boiled with bubbles as big as fish's eyes. Then she threw into it some herbs, and let it boil till there was left only a small quantity in the bottom of the kettle. This she poured into a saucer, and making the Princess Lukja hold this in her hand, fell to studying it. At length she said, "I see reflected in the liquid no snake but a man. Thou needst have no fear, my dear child. Only count the number of the snake's scales, and come and tell me, and I shall instruct thee what to do on thy wedding night."

The Princess returned to the palace and said to

the King, "O my father! It is my fate to marry the snake, but have no anxiety for me, for no evil shall befall me."

He answered, "This will send me to my grave, yet I know no help for it! But how wilt thou live with a snake as thy husband?"

"Build me a little house of stone," she told him, "in the palace garden, and we shall live there."

He built her the little stone house, and when all was ready and the day set for the wedding, she had the snake brought, and counting its scales, found them exactly forty, neither one less nor one more. Going to the hut in the forest, she told the Wise Woman, who said, "Listen carefully, my child, to what I say, and fail not to carry out my instructions exactly, for if thou dost not, the snake will have no choice but to kill thee.

"First, thou must wear in thy marriage neither thirty-nine nor forty-one, but exactly forty, robes of thin silk, all of the same color, one over the other. After the wedding feast, when you come to your house together and enter its inner room, do thou lay off the outer one of thy silken robes, saying, 'O my husband, wilt thou not put off thy robes also?' Immediately it will shed one of its scales. Take off thy second robe, and the snake will shed a second scale.

Thus continue, doffing thy silken robes one after another, and with each it will shed another of its scales till the last is gone, when thou wilt see its true form. Go now, and long life to thee!"

The Princess Lukja thanked the Wise Woman and procured the forty silken robes, and when the day of the wedding arrived she dressed herself in them. So they were married, and at the wedding feast sat side by side, the snake coiled on a brocade cushion. Now many rich gifts had been sent, such as are given to brides, but her two sisters, who were envious of her greater beauty, had chosen in derision a man's dress woven of gold thread, tufted and tasselled, with shoes of scarlet leather, and when the guests saw this they tittered and jested. But the Princess, as was fitting, thanked them and bade that it be carried, with the other gifts, to the house in the garden. And thither, when the feast was ended, they went, she with her head held high, and her snake husband crawling '*sdrouk'-sdrouk'-sdrouk*' before her.

There the Princess did not fail to carry out exactly the Wise Woman's instructions. When she laid off her outer robe in the inner room the snake shed one of its scales, and when she put off her innermost robe and it shed its fortieth scale, instantly it became transformed into a youth with skin as white as snow and of such

beauty that the whole room was lighted. From the first sight of her eyes she fell deep as the deep sea in love with him, and when he embraced her she could not kiss him enough. So they began living together in all love and happiness, she counting him a man whose like did not exist in the white world.

In the morning she said to him, "O my soul, tell me who thou art."

He answered, "That I cannot do as yet, but one day, if thou art faithful to my word, thou shalt know. Meanwhile, let no one know that I am not what I seem, and when I wear my human form let no harm come to my snake-skin, otherwise thou wilt never see me again." When he said this he called to his scales, which flew to him and grew fast to his body, and he became again the spotted snake.

Now presently her mother came from the palace and knocking at the door, called her name. She let her in, and when the Queen saw that she wore a shining face, she shed tears of joy. "O my daughter!" she exclaimed. "I thank God that thou art in health, for indeed I feared for thee!"

The Princess replied, "O Mother mine, be not in anxiety, for all will be well with me, and I have no regret."

Thus a month went over the tops of the mountains.

All day long the spotted snake remained a snake and nothing else, lying coiled in its basket and drinking milk from a bowl, while the Princess ate meats and fruits, and every night becoming the lovely youth who was her husband, each loving the other to distraction, while all who knew her pitied her, saying, "Alas for the poor girl who is doomed to such a fate!"

Now in the second month was the yearly carnival, and for that night the King commanded a splendid ball at the palace. A hundred musicians were summoned to play for the dancing and the garden was decorated with flags and lanterns. To it he invited all the notables of the realm, and the Princess Lukja's two elder sisters came with their husbands, who wore costly robes of silk brocade. She alone had no partner, and seeing her sitting alone they jeered at her, saying, "Where is her husband, the snake? She should have brought it here to dance with her!"

While the ball was at its height, the snake in the little stone house heard the sound of the music, and thinking, "I will see how my darling enjoys herself," crawled 'sdrouk-'sdrouk-'sdrouk across the garden, and climbing an arbor, looked through a window. So, seeing her sitting alone while all the rest were merry, it pitied her, and returning to their inner room, shed its scales, and taking on human form, donned the

dress of gold with the crimson shoes, and entered the palace like an eagle among crows.

In the ballroom he took his wife's hand and led her out to dance, and so splendid they looked and so gracefully they moved together, that all stood still to watch them, wondering who the stranger could be. And her sisters, seeing how he outshone their husbands, said to one another, "How shameless of her, a married woman, to dance thus with a foreigner, even though he be a nobleman!"

At length one said to the other, "Let us go to her house and bring the snake in its basket, and when the stranger sees it and learns that it is her husband, he will despise her."

So they stole from the ballroom and ran to the stone house and there they found in the snake's basket only its skin.

When they saw it, they said to one another, "Our sister's husband must be a magician, and it is he in his proper form that is dancing with her to-night! Is not the suit he is wearing the very style and color of the one that was our wedding gift? His magic lies in his snake-skin. Let us burn it and he will become only an ordinary man." So thinking, they emptied the basket onto the fire, where it burned *tsur-tsur-tsur* till it was a heap of ashes.

Now as it took fire, the Princess' husband, in the palace ballroom, ceased dancing. "I am dizzy," he exclaimed. "Let us go into the garden that the cool air may revive me." There he said to her, "My soul, I grow faint, and I fear this is our last hour together. Go and see what has befallen my snake-skin." In great dread she ran to the stone house, where she found the basket empty and her sisters blowing the fire. "This is thy reward for having lied to us!" they cried. "Well we knew thy husband was not in truth a snake! But he shall boast of his magic no more." And they returned to the ballroom rejoicing.

The Princess Lukja hastened to the garden where she had left her husband, but she found there only the golden robe and the scarlet shoes that he had worn lying empty on the ground, and went back to the little house weeping a flood of salt tears. Thought she, "My sisters, through hatred of me, have robbed me of my darling forever! For I know not where in the white world he has gone or how to find him."

In the morning, however, she bethought herself of the Wise Woman, and went to her hut in the forest and told her what had occurred. Said the old dame, "Thy husband is in truth no man, but the son of the Serpent King, whose realm is in the Underworld. This I learned when I looked into the saucer of goat's

milk. His father permitted him to leave it only on condition that he wear his snake form by day and take on human form only by night. The loss of his scales has made this impossible, and he has been compelled to return to the Underworld, where he must face his father's anger for wedding without his permission and outside the borders of his realm. Doubtless the Snake King will never permit him again to leave it."

When she heard this the Princess cried, "I cannot live without him! Tell me how to reach the Underworld and I will beg his father to forgive him and to let him return with me. I am no less a King's daughter than the prince is a King's son, and why should he not approve of our marriage?"

"By no possibility couldst thou accomplish this," the Wise Woman answered. "The entrance to the Underworld is across nine rivers and twelve valleys, where the Moving Mountains open and shut each noon. Moreover, once there, to reach the Snake Kingdom thou wouldest have to pass the grandmother of all the Witches, beside whom the fearsomest Shtriga of this land is an angel from the paradises."

Exclaimed the Princess, "I do not fear her. Only set my feet on the right trail. If thou dost not I shall spend my life searching for it."

When the old dame saw how great was her determination and courage she said, "Well, I will aid thee so far as I am able. But first return to thy house and sift the ashes in the fireplace. If thou canst find a single one of the snake scales unconsumed there may be a shadow of hope for thee."

Lukja hastened back to the palace and to the house in the garden and with a fine sieve sifted the ashes, finding, to her joy, one scale that had escaped the flames. With this she returned to the hut in the forest, where the Wise Woman gave her a little bag in which to carry it, hung on a cord about her neck. Said she, "The King of the Snake Realm is of such power in the Underworld that the scale will protect thee. Shouldst thou deem thyself in danger lay thy hand on the bag, and not even the old grandmother Shtríga can harm thee."

Then she gave her food in a back-pack, and said she, "Go on a smooth trail, my daughter, and may God help thee! These are my last instructions. When thou beholdest the Shtríga, ask her boldly for a drink of water, and whatever she bids thee drink, drink it though it be bitter as bear's gall, and give it praise. She will require thee to serve her three tasks, and these thou must cheerfully perform. Only have a care that what thou takest from her in return is of no

value. If thou takest the gold and jewels she will offer thee, in the white world they will turn to twigs and pebbles. This is all I can tell thee."

The Princess thanked her, and with the pack on her back, set out on the trail the Wise Woman showed her. She walked two days, she walked four days, across mountains and valleys, and on the morning of the fifth day she came to the Moving Mountains. She waited till the sun was directly overhead, when the sky thundered and the mountains yawned open, and ran straight into the chasm. Before she had gone a hundred steps the mountains crashed shut again behind her and she was in pitchy darkness, but seeing a glimmer of light she made toward it, and presently emerged into the Underworld, where the sun is red, the sky green, and the trees black.

Whether she went a long way or a short way, she came at length to a gray stone house with a huge chimney, but without door or window, by which she knew it for the dwelling of the Witch. She was greatly frightened, but she went up to it and knocked on its stone wall.

Instantly a dreadful sound filled the air. All around the black tree-leaves turned pale, the ground groaned and trembled, and up out of the chimney sprang the Shtriga, like an enormous bat. She descended the

sloping roof on all fours, with her mouth stretched wide, and screeched she, "Who is here? And what dost thou want?"

The Princess trembled all over. She answered, "O Grandmother, long life to thee! I am thirsty from walking, and I ask of thee a cup of water."

Howled the old Witch, "Canst thou not see the spring yonder? It is cold as ice and fresh as dew and better than any water thou hast ever tasted."

Lukja went to the pool to which she pointed, and it was covered with a slimy green ooze and wriggling with white worms, so that she shut her eyes. But mindful of what the Wise Woman had said, she knelt down and took up some of the water in her hand and sipped it. As she did so the Shtriga bounded down from the roof. "Well, is it not good? Drink more! Drink more!"

The Princess replied, "O Grandmother, it is clear as crystal and sweet as honey, and my thirst is satisfied."

"Where dost thou go?" demanded the Witch.

"I go to the Snake Realm. Of thy kindness wilt thou set me on my road?"

"Thou art on the right trail," replied the Shtriga. "But what business hast thou there? Tell me!" And she scrambled nearer, gritting her yellow teeth and curving her fingers like eagles' claws.

When she saw how the old Witch's eyes gleamed, Lukja knew that danger was after her, and she put her hand under her coat and touched the little bag that held the snake scale, and immediately the Shtriga turned pale and began to shiver. Said she, "Well, never mind what thine errand is. Thou shalt stay with me three days and do a task for me each day. If thou dost them all well, maybe I will let thee pass."

Said the Princess, "O Grandmother, give me my first task now."

The Shtriga scampered up the roof, leaped into the chimney, and presently flew back with a wooden pail. "Yonder in the forest," she snarled, "is a stockade where I keep my wild mares. Go and fetch me a pailful of mare's milk."

Lukja took the pail and went to the stockade, and when the wild mares saw her they thrust their heads over the bars, gouging the ground with their sharp hoofs and screaming with rage at her. But when she put her hand on the little bag she carried they at once became silent and drooped their heads and stood still. Nor when she climbed the stockade did they harm her, so that she came back safe to the Shtriga's house with her pail of milk.

She knocked on its wall, and all the black trees

moaned and the old Witch leaped out of the chimney. "I have brought thy milk, Grandmother," said she.

The Shtríga snatched the pail with one hand and seizing the Princess with the other, galloped up the roof and dove down the chimney with her, and as she did so the red sun set and everything was as dark as the inside of a cow. She lighted a candle, and set the pail in a corner. "Well, thou hast done thy first task," she said, "and lucky for thee that thou didst finish it before sunset! For in the dark my mares would have torn thee in pieces."

Then said she, "What shall I give thee for thy labor?"

Lukja replied, "Give me a bottle of the milk."

"That is too little!" said the old Witch. "Let it be rather a costly ring with a jewel in it."

But said the Princess, "Nay, all I want is some of the milk."

So the Shtríga, with a bad grace, filled a bottle and gave it to her, after which she fell on the pail, and thrusting her grizzled head in it, drank the milk *gull-gull-gull* to the last drop. Then she threw Lukja a crust of mouldy bread from the cupboard, and curling herself on a heap of straw, fell to snoring like a water-buffalo.

Lukja ate a bit of the bread and lay down on the

floor and went to sleep. In the morning when she woke the Shtriga was broiling gristle bones over the fire. "Health to thee, Grandmother!" she said. "Didst thou sleep easily?"

"What is that to thee?" grunted the Witch, throwing her the smallest bone. "Eat thy breakfast quickly, for thy task to-day is a long one."

When she had eaten a bit of gristle the Princess said, "O Grandmother, what is my task?" And the Shtriga told her, "In their coop behind the house is my golden cock with his twenty hens. Take them to the forest to scratch and run till sundown. Each hen will lay an egg. Gather the eggs and see that the wild hawks carry away none of the hens."

Giving her a basket, she seized her and leaping up the chimney with her, dropped her to the ground. "Mind thou break not a single egg!" she snarled, and dove down the chimney again.

Lukja found the coop, released the cock and hens, and led them into the black forest, where they ran hither and thither eating grubs and gnats. When a hen would lay an egg the golden cock would crow, and she would hasten to find it. When the sun was at high noon, and all the twenty eggs were in the basket, she sat down beneath a tree to rest and fell asleep.

She was awakened when the sun was low by a great flapping of wings, to behold a hundred fierce wild hawks swooping from the sky. But as they were about to pounce upon the hens, she touched her little bag, and shrieking in anger, they whirled about and winged away. So, with her basket of eggs, she led the flock back to the Witch's house in safety.

She shut them in their coop and knocked on the wall, and to the groaning of the trees the Witch shot up from the chimney. "I have brought back thy cock and hens, Grandmother," she said. And, snarling, the Shtríga scrambled to the coop to count the hens and returning, snatched her up and plunged down the chimney with her, while as she did so the sun disappeared and the dark fell.

She lighted the candle and set the basket of eggs in a corner, and said she, "Thou hast done my second task. Lucky for thee thou didst bring my cock and hens back before sundown! For in the dark the hawks would have struck out thine eyes!"

Then she asked, "What shall be thy reward?"

"Give me one of the eggs," Lukja answered.

"Thy labor is worth more than that!" cried the old Witch. "I will give thee a golden bracelet."

But Lukja replied, "Nay, I will take only the egg."

So, muttering, the Shtriga gave her the egg, after which she took up the basket and gobbled the other nineteen down raw, shells and all. Then she threw the Princess an ear of rusty corn and stretched herself on her pile of straw and began to snore and snort like a sick horse.

Lukja nibbled the rusty corn and lay down on the floor and went to sleep. In the morning she woke to find the Witch splitting the bones she had broiled the day before and roasting their marrow. "Long life to thee, Grandmother!" she said. "Didst thou rest well?"

"Better than thou wilt sleep to-night," answered the Shtriga, "if thou failest in thy task to-day!" And she licked her lips with such a glare in her yellow eyes that the Princess felt for her little bag, and threw her a bone, snarling, "Eat quickly."

When Lukja had sucked a little of the marrow, she asked, "O Grandmother, what is my task?"

Said the Witch, "Behind the house, in their pen, are my silver sow and her twenty piglets. Take them to the forest and let them run till sundown." So saying, she snatched her up, and springing up the chimney with her, let her drop to the ground. "Beware," she howled, "lest the wild boars devour one of the young ones!" and plunged down the chimney again.

When she had got her breath the Princess found the pen, let out the sow and her piglets, and led them into the forest, where they ran about rooting acorns and mushrooms till midafternoon, when drowsiness came to her and she lay down and fell asleep.

She was awakened by a great squealing and grunting, to behold a band of savage wild boars galloping upon the young pigs. But she put her hand on her little bag and at once they stopped their onrush and gnashing their tusks with rage, rushed away. So, when the sun was low, she brought the sow and the twenty piglets back to their pen.

She knocked on the wall and the ground shook and groaned and the Shtriga shot up from the chimney. "Thy sow and piglets are safe, Grandmother," she told her.

The Witch sped to the pen, and finding not one missing, flew back dancing with anger. "What of the wild boars?" she shrieked, grinding her teeth. "Did not my sharp ears hear them? How didst thou escape them? Tell me!"

"Perhaps, Grandmother, the Angels helped me," answered Lukja, with her hand on the little bag, and at that the Witch grew pale. She caught her up, scrambled up the roof with her, and leaped down the chimney just as the red sun set and thick dark fell.

She lighted the candle, snarling, "Well, it is lucky for thee thou didst bring them back before sundown! In the dark the wild boars would have devoured thee. Well, what art thou to have for thy trouble?"

"Give me three of the sow's silver bristles," the Princess said.

"Nay," cried the Shtriga. "They are worth nothing. Thou shalt have a necklace whose every link is a jewel."

But she replied, "O Grandmother, I will take only the three bristles."

"Someone has warned thee! Someone has warned thee!" shrieked the old Witch, in fury. But there was no help for it, and she gave her the silver bristles. Then taking from the cupboard a maggoty cheese, she gobbled it down, after which she threw Lukja the rind, and lying down on her straw began to snore like the rumble of ten bullock carts.

Lukja nibbled a bit of the rind and lay down on the floor, but could not sleep for hunger. At dawn the Shtriga suddenly ceased her snoring and the Princess, knowing that she had awakened, lay very still. The Witch came from her straw pile on all fours and sniffed about her. "She has done my three tasks," she croaked to herself, "but nevertheless I must eat her, for never have I been so hungry. How tender

At her touch Lukja grasped the little bag and pressed it, so that the Shtriga bounded into the air, howling. Three times the Witch rushed upon her, but each time the Princess pressed the bag, harder and harder, till at last, with a dreadful shriek, the Shtriga left her, and bounding up the chimney, fled from the place as if wolves were after her.

Then Lukja went to the cupboard, put all the bread and meat she found there into her girdle, and climbing the chimney, took the trail through the forest.

Whether she went a long way or a short way, at last she came to the forest's end, to a great plain where there were no more black trees but only bushes covered with yellow berries. It was alive with spotted snakes, by which she knew it for the Snake Realm. But with the little bag in her hand she went on without fear till she came to the Snake Capital and to the palace of the Snake King. Its gateway was guarded by soldiers dressed in spotted robes, with arms in their hands, and they were all weeping and moaning, so that the air was full of their lamentation.

She asked them, "Why do ye mourn?"

They answered, "Our King is stricken with deafness, and our Queen has lost the power of speech, and

their son, the Prince Royal, has become blind."

Said she, "Is there nothing that can cure them?"

They replied, "Only one thing can bring back the King's hearing, and that is the ashes from the bristles of a silver sow. The Queen's speech can be restored only when she eats the egg of a golden hen. Only the milk of a wild mare can cure the Prince Royal's sight. But in this realm never have there been known either silver sows, golden hens, or wild mares."

"What if I can cure them?" asked Lukja. And they answered, "Do so, and nothing thou couldst ask would be too great a reward."

Said she, "Take me to them."

They took her then into the palace, and lo, there sat the Snake King on his throne as deaf as a stone, with his ministers shouting into his ear without his being able to hear a word. She bade them fetch her a silver plate, and when it was brought, she took from her girdle the three bristles the Witch had given her and burned them on it. She touched the ash to his ears, and instantly he said, "I hear the *bumbullim* of the summer thunder!" She touched it to them again, and he exclaimed, "I hear folk speaking words!" She did so a third time, when he cried, "I hear the sound of an ant crawling on the wall!"

Seeing that his hearing was restored, and better

than it had ever been, all shouted with joy, and he said to the Princess, "Who art thou, who hast done this miracle for me?"

She answered, "O King's Majesty, I am a King's daughter from the white world who has come to aid thee." Exclaimed he, "Thou shalt have as great a gift of gold as thou canst carry! Would that thou couldst as easily restore the Queen's speech."

"That also I will do," she told him. "Take me to her."

The King sprang up and took her to the Queen's room, where she sat with her women about her, grasping their sleeves and moving her lips, while no sound came from them. Lukja bade them fetch a pan of burning charcoal and a pot of water, and boiled the egg the grandmother Shtríga had given her and made the Queen eat it. The Queen took one mouthful and began to cluck like a hen. She took a second and crowed like a cock. She took a third and spoke, saying, "How long it is since I have been able to speak!"

Seeing that she could now speak as well as ever she could, all her women rejoiced, and the King said, "O Princess, thou shalt go back to the white world with a gift of jewels such as no princess there has ever beheld! But would that thy skill could reach the case of our son, the Prince Royal!"

Said she, "Let me see him."

So the King and Queen took her to the Prince's chamber, where he sat in grieving and melancholy, and when she saw his sightless eyes the tears ran down her face. She bade a silver bowl be brought, and poured out the mare's milk the Witch had given her, and dipping her kerchief into it, wetted the Prince's eyes therewith. She stroked them once and he said, "I see shadows moving!" She stroked them again, and he exclaimed, "O my father and my mother! Is it you, indeed, that I see?" She stroked them a third time, and he knew her face and fainted from joy.

They rubbed his hands and feet, and seeing him coming to, the King said, "O Princess, I shall send thee back to the white world with any gift thou mayest ask that is in my giving!"

At that the Prince opened his eyes, and sprang up and embraced her, calling her by all sweet names, so that the King exclaimed, "What means this?"

He replied, "O my father, this is none other than my wife, whom I wedded without thy permission in the white world. Forgive us both, for without her even my eyes cannot comfort me!"

Said she, then, "O King's Majesty, he speaks truly. He is my husband, and I hold thee to thy royal word. I would take back with me to the white

THE GIRL WHO TOOK A SNAKE HUSBAND 187
world neither gold nor jewels, but him, my husband,
as my reward."

Said the Queen, "She has indeed earned it, and a
king's promise is not to be broken like a stone."

Then Lukja told them her story, and the King
agreed, saying, "Well, if it must be so! My second
son shall inherit my kingship and rule after me, but
thy husband shall return with thee, as his heart in-
clines, and shall go no more in snake form forever."

And after he had feasted them for a month he sent
them back, through the Moving Mountains, to the
white world, and they went to her father's realm,
where in time he ruled in the King's place. As for the
Princess' two jealous sisters, they were so eaten with
envy that they never showed their faces in the palace
again.

*Take this tale for your daughters and heirs,
Health be to us, and our sons, and theirs!*



THE BOY WHO PLAYED THE BOUSOUKA



THE BOY WHO PLAYED THE BOUSOUKA

ONCE AND ONCE, on a day of a year, in a town beyond mountains and rivers, there was a poor lad named Qerím, who had neither father nor mother nor near relations, and wandered homeless in the streets, finding his bread wherever folk gave it to him. When twelve years had gone over the tops of the mountains he saw one day sitting by the road-

side a Gheg, a man of the mountains, who was drawing forth sweet music from an instrument shaped like a long wooden spoon, with three strings which he struck with an eagle's quill, and he stopped to listen.

When the man put by his instrument, Qerím asked him, "What is the thing thou art playing called?"

The man answered, "It is called a bousouka."

Said Qerím then, "Is it hard to play?"

"Not with a teacher," the man replied. "I am the best teacher in this land, and if I could find anyone to trade it to, I could teach him to play it in an hour."

When he heard this, Qerím hung his head, for he had fallen in love with the music, and thought he would rather have the bousouka than anything in the white world. "Alas!" he said. "I have nothing I could trade for it. I am a poor boy, and the only thing I have is my name."

"That is better than nothing," said the man, "and I have always wanted a name, for I have never had one. Give me thine and take my bousouka."

"But what should I do without a name?" cried Qerím.

"I have got along very well with none," the man replied, "although at times it is somewhat awkward."

However, I dare say I shall find someone with a name he can get along without." And he rose and tying the bousouka to his girdle, set off along the road.

But when Qerím saw him about to vanish, he ran after him and said he, "I will trade with thee. My name is Qerím, and thou canst have it for thy bousouka." So the man gave him the instrument and sat down with him by the roadside and spent an hour teaching him to play it, after which he bade him farewell and went his way.

Qerím went back along the street playing his bousouka, and so sweetly he played that everyone stopped to hear him. When they called him by name, he said, "I am no longer Qerím. I have traded my name for this bousouka." After that they called him "Boy," and people far and near knew him as The-Boy-Who-Plays-the-Bousouka. So he grew till he was sixteen, caring for nothing but his playing, practising all day long, determined that he would play better than anyone else in a hundred valleys, and in the end he became so skillful that flying birds would alight on the nearest tree and cats would stop catching mice to hear it.

One day the Boy crossed the mountain to the sea-shore and sat down there to play. There was a ship

near by loading faggots, and the sailormen, when they heard the music, stood stock-still, with their burdens on their shoulders and their ears turned toward the sound. So the Captain cried out to them, "One of you go and see who plays so sweetly and bring him here. He shall play while you work and I will pay him whatever he asks."

One of the sailormen went and brought the Boy and when he had played his bousouka till the loading was finished, the Captain asked him, "How much shall I pay thee?"

The Boy replied, "I desire no money, but I would have passage on thy ship to whatever port it is bound."

Said the Captain, "That is easy."

So the Boy boarded the ship, and every day while the sailormen worked the sails and the helm, he played for them, till they came to their port at the other side of the sea.

Now the King of that city had an only daughter, the Princess Zina, as beautiful as the moon shining through a silver cloud, and he was troubled on her account for the reason that she refused to take a husband, though many princes, sons of other kings round about, desired her. Always she said, "O my father, do not compel me. For I will marry only one

who happens to please me, though I take no husband even till I am thirty years old."

The palace overlooked the dock where the ship lay, and one evening the Princess, sitting on her balcony, heard the music of the bousouka and was charmed by it. She called the King and made him listen, and said she, "O my father! I wish to have for husband none other than the player. I care not if he be blind or a hunchback, or whether he be rich or a beggar. I will marry only him."

Said the King, "This bousouka player cannot be of noble blood, or have a noble name. And a royal princess cannot take to husband a man with a common name."

But she answered, "It is not possible that one who plays such music is an ordinary man! Nor will I believe he has a common name till I hear him pronounce it with his own lips."

Said her father, "Very well, thou shalt hear it from his own lips."

Then she asked him, "If he has not a common name, may I have him for husband?"

And the King, thinking this incredible, replied, "On that one condition, I consent."

So straightway he sent a company of his troops, who boarded the ship and said to the Captain, "Our

King demands that thou give up to him thy bou-souka player, whom we are ordered to bring to the palace."

When he heard this the Captain was alarmed for the Boy's safety, for he had begun to love him as if he were his own son. Said he, "He is a passenger on my ship and has done no wrong. Why should the King demand him?" The soldiers, however, answered, "The King's word must be obeyed. But have no fear, for no harm shall come to him." So the Captain delivered the Boy to them and sailed away in his ship, wishing him all luck.

Now the King's audience chamber had a secret lattice through which his daughter might observe whoever came before him, and when she saw the Boy's good looks and graceful bearing she fell deep as the deep ocean in love with him.

Said the King, when he bowed before him, "What is thy name?"

The Boy replied, "O King's Majesty! I have no name."

Cried the King, "Who ever heard of a person with no name? What art thou called, then?"

He answered, "I am called only 'Boy.' "

When he heard this, the King's face turned black with anger, for one who has no name at all cannot

have a common one, and he regretted the promise he had made to his daughter now that there was no help for it. But the Princess laughed aloud with joy, and running from behind the lattice, took the Boy by the hand, saying, "Glory to thy mouth that says it! I have chosen thee to be my husband, and have my father's royal consent. How is it with thee? Hast thou a wife already?"

When the Boy looked at her and saw how surpassingly lovely she was, he hung his head speechless with delight, till the King said, "Hast thou a bone in thy tongue?" Then he replied to the girl, "My heart is thine to walk on! I have no wife, but I am poor, without land or possessions."

Said she, "I have a plenty for us both."

But the Boy was prideful—as are all the mountain men—and seeing the anger in the King's face, he answered, "May thy soul sing! I will be joyful to marry thee, but after we are wedded thou shalt of thine own will go with me to mine own land."

Said she, "Wherever thy feet lead, mine will follow."

So on the third day they were married and lived together in all satisfaction. Every day he played to her on his bousouka and every day she loved him the more, till two months had gone by, when he said to

er, "My love, it is time for us to depart to my own home. The ship on which I came to this place is again lying at the wharf on her return voyage, and I am minded to sail in her."

She replied, "O my golden husband, let us go. And nay our path be smooth to thy Land-of-the-Eagle." And she went to the King and told him.

Said he, "Tell him I will send with you many soldiers and a great sum of gold." But the Boy, in his pride, bade her say to her father that he had need of neither men nor money. The King, however, gave to her a little casket that locked with a silver key, containing three jewels as big as larks' eggs, one red, one blue, and one yellow, saying, "Take with you these, my daughter. They are magic stones, such as are given as gifts to Kings, which if a thief steals them will cry and sob till they are restored to their rightful owner. Since they are of great value, if thou or thy husband come to need in his land, thou mayest sell them and turn the black day to white."

So when they had made their farewells, the Boy took her to the ship, which was about to hoist its sails to depart, and all the sailors when they saw him, with his bousouka and a bride as beautiful as a pomegranate flower, welcomed them with joy, and the Captain said, "Not so much as a silver piece

shalt thou pay for passage—only play for us now and then on thy bousouka!"

They sailed thus across the sea till they came to the very spot where the ship had loaded its faggots and where he had first played to the sailors, and there they landed, while the ship continued on her way.

Asked the Princess, "Is this thy land, and are we near thy home?"

Then the Boy said to himself, "Alas! My pride has led me astray. Though the town on the other side of the mountain is my home, yet how can I take her there? As for a house, I have not two sticks one atop another. Nor have I a trade, and one cannot live on well-water." But he could not yet bring himself to tell her the truth, so he answered, "No, my home is still further. When the sun's heat is past we shall start. Meanwhile, yonder is a hut such as the gypsies use in winter; let us rest awhile in it."

They entered it, and the Princess lay down on a pile of boughs in its corner and presently drowsiness overcame her and she fell asleep. As she slept, he remembered the little casket she had brought with her, and thinking, "Perhaps it holds some trinket that I can sell for our food, while I am seeking a decent place in which we can stay," he took the

silver key from her girdle, carefully lest he awaken her, and carried the box outside the hut and opened it.

But as he sat looking at the three jewels it con-



tained an eagle swooped down from the sky and snatched them in its talons and flew away. And the Boy ran after it, saying to himself, "I should never have opened my darling's box! If I do not get them back she will have the right to hate me forever!"

He ran till the hut was far behind him and he was as breathless as a crushed frog, till he beheld the eagle soar away over the sea, when he fell on the sand weeping salt tears and bemoaning his misfortune.

Now in those days companies of bandits haunted the coast of that region, who used to steal folk away and carry them to some northern land to be sold as slaves, and by the will of Heaven a band of these fell upon the Boy while he lay lamenting, and tied him upon a horse and carried him to a far country where they sold him in service to a merchant.

There he labored for his master many months without hope of escape, grieving for his wife, whom he had left alone and helpless on the seashore of his own country. His master was kind to him, and one day, seeing him sitting in melancholy, said to him, "What can I get thee to make thee happier?"

He replied, "I am a player of the instrument which is called the bousouka. If I had one, perhaps its music would comfort my loneliness."

The merchant procured one, therefore, and every day the Boy would play on it, while he prayed unceasingly to God and the Angels to protect his wife and bring them together again.

Now on a day his master said to him, "To-morrow I shall take thee to an island I own which is a barren

rock in the midst of the sea. Thou hast been a faithful servant to me, and if thou canst make of it a vineyard thou shalt have thy liberty and sufficient money besides to take thee to thine own country." Next day, accordingly, he put provisions and seeds and iron picks and hoes aboard a ship and they sailed to the island, the Boy taking with him his beloved bou-souka.

When they came there and the Boy saw that the place was uninhabited save for wild foxes, covered with stones and sparse bushes and with a single grove of pine trees in its center, he said to the merchant, "Why are there no people here?"

His master answered, "Folk fear to live here, for it is said to be a resort of the *Óra*, and the pine grove is their meeting place."

Now the *Óra* are usually invisible but appear to those to whom they are friendly, sometimes in the form of children in floating dresses of white mist, and sometimes as women more lovely than any human women and with footfalls that make no sound at all. In the Land-of-the-Eagle there were many forests where the *Óra* came together, and might be heard calling to one another at night, telling things destined to happen, of battles that would be fought, and of good or evil fortune that was to befall. So the Boy

said to his master, "I do not fear the Óra. In my own country I have sometimes heard them speak." And he thought, "I will play my bousouka to them, and perhaps the music will please them."

When the merchant had unloaded the seed and the tools and provisions he had brought—olives and cheeses, and corn meal and dried meat—he sailed away home, and the Boy set about his task. First he began to clear the island of its stones, which he threw into the sea, but the work was hard and when he saw how small was his progress he was disheartened. At such times, of an evening, he would sit in the pine grove playing his bousouka, and one night he thought he heard, mingling with the notes, the sound of a faint sobbing, like the voice of a little child crying in the distance. As he listened it seemed to come from above his head.

When daylight broke he saw in the top of the tallest pine tree the nest of an eagle. "It cannot be possible," he thought, "that there is a child there, but nevertheless I will see." So he climbed the tree and behold, in the nest with the young eaglets lay the three jewels the eagle had snatched from him in his own country on the day the bandits carried him off, and the sobbing he had heard came from them. As soon as he put his hand on them, however, they became silent,

so that he wondered whether they had really cried or he had only fancied it.

He counted his recovery of the jewels a good sign, but as the days went by longing for his wife weighed heavy upon him. Often now, as he played of an evening, he knew the *Óra* were listening, and sometimes he would see shapes like white mist flitting by, and hear thin voices whispering together. And he would think, "Would the *Óra* might tell me that I would find her!"

One night when for grieving he could not eat his supper, as he sat in the grove he heard a voice behind him say, "O my silver sisters! The toiler is very sad. Can we not comfort him?" And another voice at a distance answered, "He sorrows for the Princess Zina." "Shall he sorrow long?" asked the first, and the other replied, "Not long."

At this the Boy was so overjoyed that he took up his bousouka again and did not leave off playing till the moon was near to setting. When at last he put it by there were white shapes dancing about him in a circle, and as they danced, a voice said, "He has pleased us for many nights with his music. Should he not have his reward?" Another voice answered, "He would have that if he knew the charm that commands the old gray snake with poison in its tooth that

guards the island's ancient treasure." Said a third voice, "Sisters, let us recite it." Then he heard many voices repeating together these words:

*"Snake before my treasure-door,
Guard it, guard it, evermore!
Till a man without a name
Drive a wild fox and a tame
Round about, round about, round about."*

When they had recited these words three times in unison, the white shapes faded and he saw them no more.

Said he to himself, "There is a treasure on this island that has been hidden of old time. I am the man without a name for whom fate intends it, and the Ora have given me the spell that has been laid on it!" And he said the lines over and over to himself till he had nailed them with an iron nail to the wall of his memory.

Then he thought, "I must first find the treasure's guardian," and when morning broke he went all about the island searching for the gray snake. Nine days he spent thus, and on the tenth he came upon a flat slab of bare rock on which a huge snake, five times his own length, lay in coil, sunning itself, which when it

saw him, reared itself, hissing like a hundred geese, and gliding into a hole beneath the rock slab, disappeared.

By this the Boy knew that the treasure was beneath the rock, and that the snake was the master of its spell. Accordingly, he made a fox trap, and baited and set it, and when he had caught a fox cub, he fell to taming it, feeding it with his own hand and petting and fondling it till it was as tame as a puppy. Lastly he caught a wild fox and tethered the pair together and drove them three times around the rock that held the treasure, and at the third time the huge snake leaped from its hole and darted away in the under-brush.

Then the Boy took his pick and prized up the rock, and beneath it was a deep dry well, filled to the very brim with gold ducats—enough to load a ship!

When he saw this vast wealth, he said to himself, "Here am I with the lost jewels again, and with a shipload of gold, if I only had a means of taking it away. Surely the *Ora* were right and I shall find my wife also!"

That night, as he lay sleeping, he heard a voice say, "Play thy bousouka!" So he took the instrument and began to play.

Now at the moment a ship filled with soldiers was

passing the island, and the breeze bore the sound to them. It was so beautiful that they reefed the sails and let down the anchor to listen, and when the morning came their captain said, "Let us go ashore and see what can have made the music, for this island has always been uninhabited."

When they found the Boy sitting alone in the pine grove the Captain asked him, "What dost thou here?"

"My master has commanded me to make of this island a vineyard," he replied.

Said they, "That will take thee, single-handed, till thy hair is white."

He answered, "Stone by stone makes the tower; grain by grain makes the loaf. Little by little I shall do it."

"Better come with us," they urged him, but he shook his head.

"Then," said the Captain, "as we cannot bear to leave thy bousouka music, we will stay and help thee with thy work, and each evening thou shalt play for us."

The Boy joyfully agreed, and captain and soldiers and sailors remained there three months, till they had made of the barren island a fertile vineyard lovely to behold. Then they bade him farewell and sailed away.

Soon after the merchant came in his ship, bringing more provisions for the Boy's labor, and when he saw how the whole island had been cleared and planted, he thought his eyes were two liars. He embraced the Boy and said he, "Thou hast done more than well, and I shall reward thee." Then he bade his sailors turn the ship about for her return.

When they came in the ship to the city where the merchant lived, he said to the Boy, "In return for making my vineyard thou shalt have thy liberty. What more can I give thee for a gift? Ask whatever thou wilt."

He answered, "I would have a ship to return to my own land, and since salt is cheap here, I will take a load of it."

Said the merchant, "That is a small gift and thou hast earned it forty times." And he gave him the ship and her cargo, and twenty men to sail her, bound to his service for a year.

Then said the Boy, "Put aboard a thousand young grapevines, and as my way lies past thy island vineyard, I will stop and plant them there." This the merchant gladly did and the Boy bade him farewell and set sail.

When he came to the island he ordered his sailors to set out the vines, which they did in ten days,

and each night, while they slept, he brought a tenth of the gold pieces from the hidden well and concealed them beneath the salt in the vessel's hold, till the last of the hoard was aboard her. Then he set sail for the mainland, where at every port he cast anchor and went about the city playing his bousouka. For he said to himself, "If my wife is here, she will hear it and will know my music. For no one has ever played the bousouka as I do."

So it was with him. But as for his wife, the Princess Zina, it must be told that when she awoke in the gypsies' hut on the seashore and found her husband gone and the jewels missing, she said to herself, "How can he have done this?" And she spent the rest of the day and the whole night weeping. Then she thought, "I cannot believe that he I so love can be a villain! What has happened I cannot imagine, but I will search the whole white world over till I find him."

So she set out along the seashore, with a broken branch for a staff, begging her bread as she went, and so lovely was she that all who saw her pitied her and the peasant who had but two handfuls of corn meal gave her one. But not one of whom she asked could tell her of a bousouka player.

However, the story of the lovely beggar and her search traveled far across the mountains and the sea,

and finally it reached the King, her father. He had wondered that no news had come from her, and had been able to think of nothing but her absence, for where the tooth aches, there the tongue will go. When he heard the tale he sprang up from his throne crying, "She is none other than my daughter! The scoundrel she married has deserted her, and if I find him I will kill him!" And he sent letters to all the Kings of the countries round about reciting her plight and praying that if a wandering bousouka player were found in their dominions, he should straightway be put to death.

Thus it came about that on a day when the Boy sat in the market-place of a certain port playing his bousouka, with his ship at the dock, there came soldiers who seized him and dragged him before the Chief Magistrate.

This man was cruel and dishonest, and when the Boy was brought before him he sent his officers away and said to him cunningly, "Thou hast already been sentenced to be hanged, but thou canst buy thy life for a price. What wilt thou give for it?"

Now the three jewels the Boy had sewn into the hem of his coat, and thinking, "I can more than make up to my wife for them with the gold I have in my ship," he took them out and said he, "Thou shalt

have these." But when the Chief Magistrate saw their size and value he nearly lost his eyebrows in his astonishment. He snatched them from the Boy and calling his officers, bade them beat him and throw him into a windowless dungeon till the next noon, when he should be hanged in the square.

The jewels the Magistrate put in his girdle, but no sooner had the Boy been dragged away than they began to cry. At first he thought it was a cat, and looked in the corners and under the table, but could find nothing bigger than a louse, and at last he realized that the sobbing came from the stones themselves. He took them out, petting and caressing them and holding them to his cheek, but they cried the louder. He dared not hide them anywhere for fear someone should find them, and at length he wrapped them in an old turban to smother the sound of their sobs, and put the turban into his breast.

Now the Princess Zina by the decree of fate came the next morning to that very city, and seeing a crowd in the Square she asked a bystander, saying, "Mayest thou live long! Why are the people gathered yonder?"

He replied, "And to thee long life! A man is to be hanged there at noon."

Said she, "Is he a robber or a murderer?"

He answered, "No. It is said that he deserted his wife."

"In this country is a man hanged, then, for deserting his wife?"

"No," he replied, "but she was the daughter of some King or other."

At this the Princess began to tremble. "Who and what is he?" she asked.

"Why," said he, "he is a bousouka player, and they say that he has no name."

When she heard this she cried out and ran to the palace and beat with her hands on its gate, shouting that she must speak with the King. But the guard, counting her only a beggar woman in a tattered robe, drove her away with whips, till at last she dragged herself weeping to the square again, praying to God and the Angels to help her.

It happened that the King, looking out of the palace window, called his Prime Minister and asked him, "Is it a holiday, that so great a throng have gathered?"

"No, O Majesty," the Prime Minister replied. "The man they call the bousouka player is about to be hanged there."

Now the King was in good spirits that morning, and said he, "Glory to thy mouth! That will be

amusing to see!" And he ordered the royal carriage to be brought and sent a messenger to command that the execution be delayed until he arrived.

So, at noon, the door of the prison opened and the soldiers marched out with the Boy, bruised and bleeding from his beating, and weeping to think that never in this life would he see his wife again; and they brought him to the gallows where the Chief Magistrate was sitting, and put the rope around his neck. Presently the King arrived, and the Chief Magistrate got down from his great chair and the King sat in it. And the hangman bowed before the King, waiting his word.

When the Princess Zina saw the King himself there, she burst through the ring of soldiers and threw herself at his feet, crying, "O King's Majesty! Spare this man, for he has done no wrong!" The watching people, hearing, raised a loud shout, for they had loved the Boy's music and were sad to behold him in such a plight; and as for him, his joy at seeing her, even as a beggar, was so great that he fell down and almost choked himself to death with the noose that was about his neck.

Demanded the King of her, "Who art thou?"

She replied, "I am his wife."

The Chief Magistrate said, "Do not listen to her."

This man's wife was a King's daughter, and this woman is only a crazy beggar."

But the Princess cried, "I am that same King's daughter and no other."

Then the King bade her tell him her tale, and she told how her father had given her the three magic jewels, that she might sell them if she and her husband met with necessity in his own land, and how she had waked in the gypsies' hut to find them gone.

When she had related thus far, the King turned to the Boy and asked him, "Didst thou steal them and desert thy wife there?"

Answered the Boy, "No." And he told his tale up to the day he had found the stones again by their crying in the eagle's nest on the merchant's island, when the King exclaimed, "How wondrous those jewels that have the power to cry! Would I could see them! What did they sound like?" The Princess replied, "Like the little child we hear sobbing now."

The King looked about him, for he had been hearing the same sound out of one ear for some time, and he cried in a loud voice, "Whoever has that crying child, bring it here to me!" But there was no child to be seen.

Now the Chief Magistrate knew the sobbing came from the three stolen jewels hidden in the turban in

his breast, and he was afraid. Said he, "O Majesty, I will find the child for thee." And he would have lost himself in the crowd, but the King said, "Come hither!"

The Chief Magistrate came trembling, and every step he took the crying sounded louder, till the King exclaimed, "It is thou thyself who hast the child about thee!" He bade the soldiers search him, and finding the turban in his breast they unrolled it and there were the jewels.

When the King saw them his eyes flashed black fire. He asked the Chief Magistrate, "Whence hadst thou these?" And the Boy answered for him, "I have carried them this year past in the hem of my coat, till he took them from me and gave me a beating in return."

Said the King, "Give them to her," and the instant the Princess took the stones in her hands their sobbing ceased.

Then said the King, "Your stories are true, indeed!" And he commanded that the Boy be released and that royal carriages be brought to carry them both to the palace with him as his royal guests.

When they heard this, all the people shouted for gladness. Only the hangman said, "O Majesty, I presume, then, we shall have no hanging to-day." Said

the King, "There is no reason to disappoint the people." And he bade them hang the Chief Magistrate in the Boy's place.

So that was done straightway, and the Boy and the Princess Zina remained one month, they remained two months and three months, in that capital, where the King feasted them every day. He sent his soldiers to fetch the gold from the Boy's ship—and it was a very great treasure, sufficient to purchase all that the soul could desire—and at the end of their stay he commanded his army to conduct them, with the gold, to the land of her father.

He received them with all joy and adopted the Boy as his son, and there they lived out their lives in happiness. And in time the Boy ruled in his stead. Every day he played his bousouka, and his wife had the three jewels set in his golden crown, and they never cried again.

*There was I to eat the cake and drink the good wine.
Now I've told thee my tale, tell thou me thine!*

THE PRINCESS WHO HAD THE SILVER
TOOTH



THE PRINCESS WHO HAD THE SILVER TOOTH

WHETHER it is true or not, whether you believe it or not, may the telling and the hearing bring us good luck. Well, then!

There were two neighbor Kings named Pjeter and Marko who ruled their lands in such friendship that an enemy of one was an enemy of the other, and King Pjeter had no son, but three motherless daughters, for whom he had not as yet chosen husbands.

Now King Marko, his friend, fell out with the

ruler of another land who declared war against him. Accordingly, King Marko sent a letter to King Pjeter, which said:

O my Brother-in-Rule, long life to thee! This is to tell thee that an army marches against my border intent on wasting my realm, and by reason of our close friendship I pray thine aid. A good friend is a gate to Paradise. Come to me with thy good sword and wise counsel and God will give us the victory.

When King Pjeter read this letter he was greatly disturbed. Said he to himself, "While this is not my quarrel, I am beholden to King Marko and am bound to help him. Yet I am old, and if I lose my life in the war what will become of my three daughters?"

Now he had three thrones, one of gold on which he sat when he was joyful, one of silver which he used when he was neither happy nor unhappy, and one of iron for days when he was sad; and finding him seated on the iron throne, his oldest daughter said to him, "O my father! Why art thou cast down? Has something happened to grieve thee?"

He answered, "How shall I tell thee, my child! King Marko goes to war and has called on me to come with him to battle. Would that I had a son, who could take my place in this!"

Said she, "It is true that I am a girl, but thou hast taught us three daughters all manly sports, such as horsemanship, and sword play and throwing the spear. Why should I not do as thy son would do? Give me armor and weapons and thou shalt see."

Said he, "That is impossible. War is for men, not women." She urged him, however, night and day, giving him no rest, till at last he consented, and gave her armor with a sword and a horse to ride, and she set out to the war.

To test her courage he took the skin of a huge wolf and went in advance to a mountain ravine through which she must pass, where he put on the skin and sprang out upon her, so that she cried out in fear, and dropping her sword, wheeled her horse and galloped back, nor did she draw rein till she came to the palace. There, in shame, she took to her bed, and when King Pjeter returned, she said to him, "Alas! I had gone but a league when my horse took fright and threw me and sprained my ankle, so that I cannot fight in thy place!"

He replied, "Sorrow not, my daughter. Thy desire shows thy good heart." And he took seat again on his iron throne.

Then his second daughter came to him, and seeing him there, said to him, "O my father! What weighs

upon thee? Has something happened to make thee melancholy?"

He replied, "O my child, how shall I tell thee! King Marko is attacked by his enemy and has summoned me to join him in the war. Would that I had a son to go in my stead!"

Said she, "I am a girl, but why should I not go? For I am strong and know the use of arms. Let me play the part of a son."

But he shook his head. "Fighting is man's trade," he said, "and a woman is no warrior."

However, she would not take no for an answer, and urged him so continually that in the end he agreed, and gave her a horse and armor and a sword, and she departed for the fray. But he took the hide of a great wild boar, and going in advance to the mountain ravine, leaped out upon her in it, so that she screamed in terror and throwing away her sword, galloped back to the palace. There she, too, took to her bed in shame, and when the King, returning, came to her, she said, "O my father! I had gone but a league when such a sickness seized me that I fear the tear of a Shtoyzavállè has fallen on my head!"

Now, as all know, the Shtoyzavállè are the Angels who, when Lucifer the Archangel rebelled against God, took neither side in the battle, and so cannot

enter Paradise, but must remain in the air. They weep continually, and if the tear of one of them falls on a man or a woman it causes an illness like sunstroke.

The King answered, "Grieve not, my daughter, but rest and thou wilt soon be well. Thy desire shows thy good heart." And he returned to his iron throne.

Lastly his youngest daughter, who was named Theodora, came to him. She was the loveliest of the three—so beautiful that there was none to compare with her in all the lands beyond the mountains. She had for playmate a little dog named Noïtéshe, with a shaggy brown coat, which could not only dance, but could speak, and which went with her everywhere. When she saw King Pjeter was sitting on his iron throne, she said, "O my father! Thou art in sorrow. What saddens thee?"

He replied, "How shall I tell thee! King Marko faces a foe who comes against him with a great army, and he desires me to assist him. Would thou wert a son, to go instead!"

Said she, "I am a girl, but I am a King's daughter, and I would be a poor one indeed if I could not play the part of a son in this matter. Am I not equal to a man in strength and quickness of hand? No prince in thy realm can best me in riding or in fight. I will go with King Marko and battle by his side."

“Nay,” said he. “What would men say of me if I sent thee, the youngest of my daughters, to the war?”

She continued to press him, however, even with tears, till at last he said, “Well, if thou must, thou shalt go.” And he gave her a fiery horse and a sword and armor, and she rode away, with her little dog Noïfeshe in a basket tied to the saddle.

And as he had done with her sisters, he took the pelt of a monstrous bear and in the mountain ravine wrapped himself in it and flew out upon her. But she leaped from her horse, and drawing her sword, met him with such skill and courage that he threw off the bear’s pelt, exclaiming, “Hold thy hand!”

Then he embraced and kissed her. “Though a girl,” said he, “thou wilt never shame me! But for thy long hair no one would know thee for one.”

“Cut off my hair,” she told him, and with his knife he cut it short like a lad’s, and she bade him farewell and rode to join King Marko.

Now King Marko’s troops faced the invading army on a great plain, ready for the battle. She rode to his tent and dismounted before him, saying, “My father, King Pjeter, sends me, his son Theodor, to thee in his place.” When he saw her, fully armed and sword in hand, with her horse pawing the ground and snorting for the fight, he rejoiced. “Thou art a

worthy King's son!" he exclaimed, and putting her with his highest officers, bade his heralds sound the call for the battle.

Then the two hosts rushed against one another and the fight began in the greatest fury. They fought one hour, they fought two hours and three hours, till the enemy was hard beset, with generals fallen and troops in confusion.

Now the son of that King was named Qyrumbéti, and he was stalwart and handsome and strong as the rocks. When he saw his father's plight he dismounted from his horse and with a sword in either hand rushed against King Marko's troops like a swift black eagle, so that they fell back, while his own men took heart and reformed their lines. Then, standing in the space between the two armies, he lifted his swords and shook them, shouting, "O King Marko! Let thy best warrior come against me single-handed, and let the result decide the day!"

Scarce had he said this when Theodora, leaping from her saddle, engaged him in the combat, and both armies laid aside their weapons and stood watching. The Prince Qyrumbéti was brave as a young lion, but she was his equal in sword play, and so they contended till evening, neither able to overcome the other, till dark fell and they could see to fight no longer.

Then the two Kings came together and made peace, and next day they drank wine in friendship from a golden cup. Before the invading army departed, the King who led it said to King Marko, "As a pledge of our good will, let thy champion, Theodor, who fought my son, go with us to my capital for a visit, for Prince Qyrumbéti is enraptured with him, and the two should be friends." King Marko agreed, and Theodora (whom all supposed a lad) went with them, taking with her her little dog Noïtéshe in his basket.

For twenty days they rode together, she and the young Prince, he so handsome that it took good eyes to look at him, and she more lovely than a lad has any right to be. They rode bridle to bridle by day, and slept side by side in the same tent by night, but while she was long ago deep as the deep sea in love with him he knew not what ailed him.

So they came to his capital, where she was housed in the royal palace and entertained with all manner of feasts and sports. But each day Prince Qyrumbéti grew more melancholy. His mother, the Queen, noted this, wondering that when he was with the young Prince Theodor he seemed at one time both joyful and sad. Then she fell to observing his guest, and noting how his cheeks and chin had not a sign of a hair on them, a suspicion came to her. She went to

her husband and said she, "Hast thou noted anything strange in the Prince Theodor?"

He asked, "What meanest thou?"

She answered, "He is too handsome for a boy and his skin is like an apricot's. What if he should be not boy, but girl?"

Exclaimed he, "Nonsense!"

"Nevertheless," said she, "it is in my mind that I am right and that our son has fallen in love with her, but does not know it."

"It will be easy to test it," he replied, and summoning his son Qyrumbéti, he said to him, "Prince Theodor has not visited the bazaar. Do thou take him there, that he may buy what pleases his fancy." So Qyrumbéti took his guest to the bazaar, while the King said to his wife, "If he is what thou thinkest, he will have an eye for jewels and silver trinkets and brocade girdles. If he is what he seems he will buy daggers or bridle chains."

Now the little dog Noitéshe was lying beneath the divan in the room where they talked. He hastened to tell his mistress what he had heard, and in the bazaar Theodora did not even glance at anything but swords, guns, and saddles. So that after they returned to the palace and the King had questioned Qyrumbéti, he said to the Queen, "Thou wert mistaken."

Said she, "There is another test which I shall try. To-night I shall secretly put under his bed a bouquet of fresh flowers. In the morning, if he is a lad they will be no less beautiful, while if he is a girl they will be faded."

This time also the little dog chanced to be under the divan, and hearing their conversation, ran to tell his mistress. So that Theodora that night slept not in the bed but on the floor, and in the morning the flowers were as fresh as ever.

When the Queen reported this to the King, he laughed. Said he, "Well, art thou convinced? To be sure he is no more girl than I am!"

But said she, "I am not yet convinced." And that evening she called Qyrumbéti to her room and said to him, "O my son! Of late thou hast seemed sad and moody, when thou shouldst be joyful. Can it be that thou dost no longer look with pleasure on the Prince Theodor?"

He replied, "O Mother mine! I know not why it is, but when he is not with me I cannot endure even the sunlight or the singing of birds. Yet when he is by my side, I know not whether to laugh or weep. I fear that I am sick, for indeed at some times I wish to die."

Said she, "My son, by those words I know that

thou art in the grip of love. I am convinced that our guest is in truth princess rather than prince."

When she said this he turned pale. "How may I tell if this is so?" he exclaimed. "If he is a girl I must marry her. In the whole white world there is none other for me!"

Said she, "To-morrow morning propose that you ride together. Turn your horses to the seaside and when you come to the beach, say to him, 'Let us refresh ourselves with a bath in the salt waves.' So saying, doff thy clothes and leap into the water. If the Prince Theodor is a lad he will do likewise, but if a girl she will make some excuse."

Accordingly, next morning after they had break-fasted, Prince Qyrumbéti said to Theodora, "Let us mount our horses and ride," and they did so. But this time the little dog Noitéshe had not heard the Queen's words, and when the Prince turned their course toward the sea she made no objection. So, when their horses' hoofs tossed the white sand, he dismounted, and saying, "Come, comrade, the sun is over-hot. Let us cool ourselves in the waves!" he threw off his clothes and leaped into the water, shouting to her to follow.

At this she knew that she was discovered. Thought she, "He has known it all along, and counting me un-

maidenly, has no respect for me!" And in shame and anger, she cried,

*"Whether thou wert fooled, or no,
Girl I came, girl I go!"*

With the words she turned her horse, when, seeing her taking to flight, he cried to her, "Take this token of me!" and threw the signet ring from his finger, which struck out one of her teeth.

She galloped like the wind to the palace, where her little dog waited her return at the door, and snatching him up, set out for her own country. Whether she rode a short while or a long while, at length she arrived there and King Pjeter welcomed her with joy. Exclaimed he, "Glory to the hoofs that bring thee! Is the war finished?"

She answered, "It is finished, and save for the loss of a tooth, I am unhurt."

So she took up her life as before, and the King had a silver tooth made for her, from which she was called the Princess-of-the-Silver-Tooth. During her absence her older sisters had married, but though he would have chosen a husband for her also, she would not listen, saying always, "My dear father, I am quite happy with thee and my little dog Noïtëshe." But

having fallen in love with the Prince Qyrumbéti, when she remembered how beautiful he had looked in the sea with the sunlight shining on his white body, and told herself that he would never love her in return, she would weep salt tears in secret.

So it was with her. But as for Prince Qyrumbéti, when he found the little tooth lying on the ground by his ring, he thought, "Alas! What have I done! She will hate me now forever!" He put the tooth in his girdle and galloped to the palace, and when he found that she had fled, he fell down in a faint. They brought him to by burning a crow's feather under his nostrils, when he said to his mother, "Thou wert right! But now I have lost her!" And in his grief he rose not from his bed for seven days.

At the end of this time she said to him, "O my son! Do not give way to despair, but hold thy heart in peace. Journey to her land, for there she has gone; and when thou hast found her, use thy wits to gain her."

He took heart at this and rose and bathed and set out, with money in his girdle, for the land of King Pjeter. On the way he bought a quantity of costly trinkets of gold and silver such as women love, and when he came to its capital, having traded his costly robes and turban for the dress and tray of a pedlar,

and dyed his face and hands two shades darker with walnut juice, he hawked them about the streets, crying, "Gold and silver earrings and finger-rings! Bracelets and girdles of silver and gold!" But he asked for everything so great a price that those who would have bargained with him went away with their upper lips lengthened, saying to one another, "The things this stranger carries must be of the greatest worth and variety." Thus his reputation grew till it reached the royal palace.

One day the old woman who built the fires for the Princess Theodora said to her, "Thou shouldst see the wares of the foreign pedlar who has come to the city. Folk say they are finer than any in the shops and fit only for Kings' daughters."

She answered, "Go and see them, and if they are indeed so fine, tell me."

The old woman accordingly found Qyrumbéti in the bazaar and sitting down with him, said, "Long life to thee! My mistress has sent me to see thy wares."

He replied, "And to thee long life! My goods are of great price, fit only for Kings' daughters."

Said she, "My mistress is of high degree."

So he unwrapped them and spread them before her, and after she had admired them, said she, "I shall tell my mistress of them."

“Glory to thine eyes!” he said, and gave her a silver ring for herself. Now she noted that he wore a fine gold chain about his neck under his shirt, and she asked him, “What wearest thou on that?” He drew it out and she saw that at its end was a little tooth. At that she laughed, saying, “Thou wearest about thy neck a tooth of bone that should be in thy head, while my mistress wears in her head a tooth of silver that should be about her neck!”

From this he guessed that the old woman was a servant of the Princess Theodora, and he took back the silver ring and gave her a gold one, and said he, “Blessings on her house! I have a gold bracelet that shall be thine on the day she sends for me.”

So the old woman went back to the palace and said to the Princess, “O my soul! I have seen the foreign pedlar’s stock, and there is nothing in all this land to be laid beside it. Let me fetch him, that they may gladden thine eyes.”

She answered, “Do so.”

The next day, therefore, the old woman found him on a street corner, and said she, “My mistress will see thee, and she is no less than the daughter of our King.”

Giving her the gold bracelet he had promised her, he went with her, rejoicing, and she led him to the

palace and to the Princess Theodora's room. When he saw her his breath stopped, and his love overcame him, so that he could not speak. As for her, worn as he was from the hardships of the journey and with his darker skin, she did not recognize him, and thinking he had a touch of sun, sent the old woman for a glass of wine and made him drink it, while she examined the articles he had brought.

Among these was a golden plate on which he had had engraved a picture of the royal palace where she had been a guest, and seeing it, she caught her breath. "What is that?" she asked.

He answered, "It is the palace in my own country."

Said she, "It is a noble one, fit for a great King. Long life to him! And to his son, if son he has, good health."

"He has a son," he told her.

"What is his name?"

"He is called Qyrumbéti."

When he spoke the name the blood rose in her cheeks, and he was glad, thinking, "She at least remembers me." Presently she dismissed him, bidding him bring his tray again the next day when she would make selection of what most pleased her.

Now as he stood before her, his neck chain had

peeped from betwixt his robe edges and she had noted it. When he was gone she said to the old woman, "What luck charm does he wear on his neck chain?" The other answered, "O my lady, it is a dear little tooth, and never have I seen the like."

At that the Princess started. "Can it be," she thought, "that it is he, indeed? There was something in his look that made my heart beat!" And she said to the old woman, "With all his valuables it is not safe for him to stay at an inn, where there are always thieves about. Overtake him and, if he will, he may stay here in the servants' quarters. Only let him think it is of thine own kindness."

The old woman, accordingly, ran after him to the courtyard, and said, "There are many robbers in the city, and I fear for thee at thine inn. Let me find thee a place here, where thou and thy goods shall be safe."

"Glory to thy lips!" he answered, and went with her gladly, and she put him in a room next her own and bade the gate guard pass him in and out of the palace.

That afternoon as he sat pondering his situation and feeling his love like a hot coal in his breast, he exclaimed aloud, "O my Princess-of-the-Silver-Tooth! How long the time till to-morrow!" Now Theodora had bidden her little dog follow him and re-

port to her what he said and did, and lying in the courtyard beneath his window, Noïtéshe heard this and ran at once to tell her. Thought she, then, "It is none other than the Prince Qyrumbéti!" And she called the old fire-lighter and said to her, "I am lonely to-day. Bid the foreign pedlar come to me an hour after sunset. He shall tell me of his own country and his tales perhaps will distract me."

When the Prince received the message, he told himself, "This will be my chance!" And he went to a druggist and bought a packet of a powder so powerful that a pinch of it would cast a person into such a deep sleep that if he fell down on the ground no grass would grow near him. He put this in his breast and carried it with him when the old woman brought him to the Princess.

When she saw him this time she knew him, and her love made her cheeks like spring roses. She made him sit down and bade the old woman fetch wine. When she brought it, he said, "O Princess! Give me leave to pour it." And as he poured it he dropped into her cup and that of the old woman a pinch of the powder from his breast, so that they had no sooner drunk it *gull-gull-gull* than they fell instantly into a slumber from which an earthquake would not have wakened them.

Then he put the Princess, together with her little dog, into the sack which had held his gold and silver articles, and took the sack on his back and bore it from the palace. At the city gate he had waiting a swift horse, and he set off, carrying her before him on the saddle, for his own land.

He rode all night without pause till a cock crowed, when the Princess stirred in his arms and, half-conscious, said she:

*“Whether thou wert fooled, or no,
Girl I came, girl I go.”*

Presently another cock crowed, and she opened her eyes, saying, “Where am I?”

At that he laughed, and answered her:

*“Fooled indeed I was. But now
Husband am I. Wife art thou.”*

Then she knew that he had tricked her and stolen her away, and anger seized her. She closed her mouth and said no word more, remaining silent throughout the entire journey, till he brought her to his capital.

He took her to his mother, who kissed her, saying, “O my soul! Be not angry with my son, who loves

thee more than his ears and cannot live without thee, but consent to be my dear daughter and his wife!"

But she stood before them with her eyes cast down and would not speak. Nor would she reply to the King, so that they knew not what to do, and Prince Qyrumbéti's shoulders fell. And thus a whole year went over the tops of the mountains without anyone hearing from her so much as an "Ah!" or an "Oh!"

At the end of this time the King lost patience, and summoning the Prince, said, "O my son! There is an end to everything. It is time for thee to take a wife, and as she will not have thee, choose another."

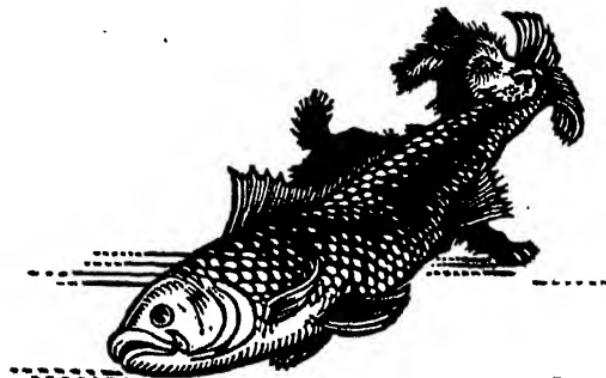
The Prince Qyrumbéti went to her and besought her with tears, but to no avail, and at last he was forced to agree. So another bride was chosen and the wedding was arranged. And the King gave order that the Princess Theodora sweep the street by which the bride would pass from her parents' house to the palace. This she did with no word of complaint, wearing out seven brooms in the labor.

All were busy preparing the marriage feast and the bride was entering the gate, when the Prime Minister came to the King and said, "O Majesty! The fishermen have not brought the fish for the bridal dish, for there is none to be caught in the river."

Cried the King, "Whoever heard of a marriage

feast without the dish which is prepared by the bride?" And he commanded that all the fishermen in the city go and throw their nets. But though five hundred of them toiled for half the afternoon they got no fish as big as your little finger, so that the King and Queen were in despair.

It happened, however, that the little dog Noïtéshe,



overhearing them complaining, went and told the Princess, and she bade him go and try. He ran to the river and quicker than one could tell it back he came, dragging by the tail a fish as long as a hoe handle.

When the Princess had drawn and cleaned it, she wrapped it in fresh fig leaves and carried it to the kitchen. But when the bride saw it all ready for the baking, she fell into a passion. "Dost thou think thyself the bride?" she cried, and snatching it from the

Princess' hands, thrust it into the oven. But in her anger she forgot to sweep away the hot ashes, and when the oven door was opened, the fish was a cinder. When she saw it burned and blackened shame overcame her, and she tore off her veil and ran back to her parents' house, shrieking.

That night Theodora said to her little dog, "O Noïtéshe, I can bear it no longer. Do thou make thy way, if thou art able, to our own land, and tell my father what has befallen me, so that he can come to my rescue." He answered, "I will start this very night."

This he did, but his legs and his breath were short and the trail was long and the hills were high (and once the gypsies stole him) so that another year went by before she heard of him again.

All this while, though Prince Qyrumbéti pleaded with her many times, she would speak no word, so that at length the King chose a second bride for his son and preparations were made as before for the wedding. And again the fishermen could bring no fish by reason of the great drought that had dried up the river's deep pools. Hearing of it, this time Theodora went alone to the river and said a prayer, when, as she rose from her knees, a fish, leaping for a blue-bottle fly, fell on the bank. This she opened and

dressed, and brought it to the palace kitchen in time for the bride to prepare her bridal dish.

Now this bride was no less spiteful than the first had been, and hated Theodora for her greater beauty. When she opened the oven door, seeing it filled with ashes, she said to her, "There is no brush to sweep away the ashes. Wilt thou not let me use thy hair?" For reply the Princess came, and bowing her head, let down her long curling hair and the bride swept away the ashes with it. To the surprise of all, however, it was not burned, but shone more goldenly and curled more beautifully than before.

At that the bride was more envious of her than ever, and when the oven was clogged again, she thought, "Ashes must be good for the hair!" and used her own. But lo, it caught fire from a spark and blazed up, leaving her as bald as a pumpkin. So like the first, she ran home in shame without once looking back.

Now while all was thus in confusion, with the Queen weeping, the King fuming with rage, and the Prince Qyrumbéti in the depths of despair, there came galloping from the frontier sentinels of the King, crying that a great army was marching on the realm. For the little dog Noïtéshe, after hardships that had worn him to his bones, had at last reached

the Princess' country and her father had marshalled his troops and called upon his neighbor, King Marko, to aid him, and their joint forces had set out to avenge her wrong.

Immediately the King bade his generals assemble his soldiers and make ready for the conflict. But Prince Qyrumbéti went to Theodora, and said he, "O my Princess! Art thou willing to plunge our two countries into bloody war over such a matter? For since the first day we met in the fight I have loved thee and I shall never love another. I stole thee from thy home because I could not live without thee. But during these three years thou hast given me only silence and contempt. I pray thee, soften thy heart toward me, before I fling my life away in the battle."

When she heard these words Theodora's shoulders fell. Said she, "I should be punished with all punishments! I also have loved thee since our first sight of one another, and if thou shouldst die thus, I would no more wish to live. Let us forgive one another."

Then in joy he kissed her on the mouth and she kissed him. They went and told the King and Queen, and the royal cooks fell to again, and the feast being made ready, they were married that same hour.

And when the army of her father and King Marko

came, they rode to meet it side by side, wearing their marriage crowns.

Up to this time the tale has lasted, and its tellers are fortunate. Retell it and thou shalt be luckier than they. May we have health!

THE BOY WHO WAS BROTHER TO THE
DRAGÚE



THE BOY WHO WAS BROTHER TO THE DRAGÚE

IN A LAND so far away that an eagle would moult three times in flying thither, there was once a King named Sokol, who through misfortune had lost his throne. An enemy was seated upon it while he was reduced to a poor farm on the skirt of the capital, where he labored as a vine-grower and his wife who had been Queen all day long spun hemp thread to

help keep their souls in their bodies. There remained to him, besides, only his finger ring that held his jewel of kingship, which was a diamond as big as an acorn, and a blooded mare that could run five days and nights without stopping to rest. He had no son, which was like an iron nail in his heart.

One day in the winter season, when there was not so much as a handful of corn meal in the bin, he went to the river and cast his line and took a fish of great size and red in color, which said to him, "O Sokol, health to thee! I am thy good luck. Take me home and when thou hast cut me in pieces and cooked me, eat my body and let thy wife eat my head. Give my fins and tail to thy mare and bury my entrails and scales in thy garden." When it had said this it ceased to breathe.

Sokol did as it had bidden him, and in the next harvest his wife bore him two sons, one blue eyed with golden hair whom they named Zjermi, and one with eyes and hair like night whom they called Handa—and both so beautiful that the sun seemed to sit on their foreheads! His mare brought forth two strong-limbed foals, and there sprang up amid the flowers in his garden a silver sword. Also his vines bore more richly than any in the neighborhood, so that he became prosperous.

His wife tended the babes like princes, feeding them at first with her own milk, and later with white bread made of wheat meal sifted through seven sieves, the flesh of doves and fat lambs, and wine pressed from white grapes. She washed them in fresh spring water, combed their hair with a silver comb, and clad them in clean thin linen. For his part, Sokol, as the boys grew, taught them to ride a horse bareback, to throw the spear and wield sword and dagger, and to hunt the wild beasts of the forest. So the years went over the tops of the mountains till they were seventeen and as sturdy and handsome as young birch trees.

At the end of that time plague came to the land and their father and mother died. When his black hour caught him Sokol called the lads to his bedside. "O, sons of my soul!" he said, "I am about to leave you. Whatever fate holds for you, forget not you are King's sons. Treat your friends with kindness and your enemies with justice, and may you in time win back to the high estate from which I have fallen."

The brothers buried their father and mother with tears, mourning for them ten days and nights. Then Zjermi said to Handa, "The white world is wide. Let us go forth, like the King's sons we are, to seek our fortunes."

Handa replied, "Thou hast spoken mine own desire."

Said Zjermi, then, "Our father has left us two things of value, his finger ring of kingship and his silver sword. Since we are of equal age, let us cast lots for them." Accordingly they cast lots and the choice falling to him he chose the sword and the ring went to Handa. So Handa put the ring on his finger and Zjermi thrust the sword in his girdle, and mounting their swift horses, they rode from the capital together to find what they should find.

They rode thus five days, they rode ten days, and on the eleventh day they came to where the road branched, one trail going to the north and the other to the south. There Zjermi said, "Here let us part, since no two men have like fortunes. Do thou choose one trail and I will follow the other."

But, "Nay," said Handa, "the choice shall be thine."

"Let us cast lots," said Zjermi. So they did so, and the lot fell to Handa.

"Well, I will take the northern trail," said he, "and thou shalt have the southern. May we both find good luck!"

Said Zjermi, then, "Each of us wears a locket whose jewel will turn black if he is in sickness or peril.

Let us exchange these, thou taking mine and I thine. If I see thy jewel losing its color I will at once return to this spot and take thy trail to find thee, and do thou do likewise."

To this Handa agreed. Each hung the other's locket about his neck and they kissed each other and set out in their different directions.

Now as for Handa, he went as far as he went, crossing plains and mountains, till he came to a forest so dense that the sunlight did not pierce its shade, and a league within its border was twilight. On its edge sat an old man, with a white beard three yards long, cracking hazelnuts. Said Handa, "Health to thee, Grandfather. Canst thou guide me through this forest?"

The old man replied, "And to thee health! Ask me not that. It is to warn travellers like thyself against entering it that I sit here."

"Why should one not do so?" demanded Handa.

Answered the other, "In its center is the Palace of a Beautiful-of-the-Earth so lovely that a hundred brave heroes have sought to win her to wife. But she is guarded by a Mämädréqja—which is to say an Old-Woman-of-the-Wood—who has magicked the palace so that no man who has entered it has come forth alive."

“I am a King’s son,” said Handa, “and fear no Mämädréqja in the white world! Nevertheless, I thank thee.”

“Very well,” said the old man, “if thou wilt not heed my warning, go. And mayest thou not stumble on misfortune.”

Handa spurred his horse into the gloomy forest, thinking, “For a wife so beautiful one might well risk his life.” He rode two hours and three, and in the fourth hour the Mämädréqja, who every day roamed the forest sniffing the breeze, caught the scent of him and put herself in his path. When she saw him riding, with hair black as midnight, cheeks red as two ripe pomegranates, and a brow white as mountain snow, she said to herself, “He is handsomer than any who have yet come this way. I will have some sport with him.” So she took the form of a maiden in a brocade robe and cried out to him, saying, “O Sir, whoever thou art, help me in my distress!”

When he beheld her, he thought, “This can be none other than the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, though she is not so lovely as I had thought!” He answered, “Health to thee, damsel! What dost thou here, and what harm has befallen thee?”

“Alas!” said she, “I have struck my foot against a stone and it gives me such pain that I cannot walk. I

pray thee, take me up on thy horse and carry me to my palace, which is not far distant, and all my thanks will be thine!"

"Right gladly!" he answered, and lifting her, set her before him on the saddle.

Said she, then, "The way lies to the right," and he turned his horse in that direction; but when they had ridden some while, she said, "Nay, I was mistaken. We should go to the left." So she continued, pointing him now one way and now another, always leading him cunningly farther from the heart of the forest, till they came to its border, when she sprang to the ground and resuming her hag form, scrambled, cackling with laughter, up a tree bole, and leaping from treetop to treetop, like an enormous lynx, disappeared in the forest.

When, angered that he had been so fooled, he looked about him, lo there sat the old man, where he had been sitting all along, cracking hazelnuts. "Long life to thee!" said the old man. "Has bad luck caught thee so soon that thy shoulders droop?"

Handa told him his story and the old man said, "Thou hast met the Mämädréqja herself. Unless thou canst outwit her, thou wilt never see the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, no, never."

That night Handa slept on the ground, wrapped in

his cloak, and next morning rode again into the forest. He rode four hours, he rode five hours, when again the Old-Woman-of-the-Wood, sitting in a treetop, scented him, and whistling up from their lairs in windfall and covert fifty fierce wolves, she took the form of a huge gray she-wolf and led them against him.

Thus the pack, yelping and howling, rushed upon him, so that his horse, bounding into the air, turned and galloped back with him, so mad with fright that he could not stop it. Nor did the wolves leave off their pursuit till they came to the forest's fringe, where Handa leaped from the saddle, sword in hand, and struck such a stroke at the pack's leader that the blade cut off one of her paws, and she fled, limping on three legs and howling with pain, followed by the rest, while the severed paw at his feet became a hand, covered with black hairs, with fingers curved and clawed like an eagle's.

When he looked over his shoulder, lo, there sat the old man, cracking his hazelnuts. "Health to thee!" said he. "So thou hast again met misfortune! As thou seest, the great gray she-wolf was the Mämädréqja herself. Unless thou canst best her, give over all thought of seeing the Beautiful-of-the-Earth!"

"See her I will!" answered Handa. "And once I

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find her palace, nothing shall prevent me from entering it."

Said the old man, then, "Thou hast courage. But beware to enter it by its gateway, for he who passes through it that instant falls down dead."

That second night also Handa slept on the ground wrapped in his cloak and when morning came, rode for the third time into the forest. He rode all day, he rode all night, seeing neither bird, beast, nor human being, and at sunrise of the next morning he came to where the thick trees became a flowering meadow, in whose center stood a palace of golden-veined marble surrounded by a high wall of gray stone.

"Well," thought he, "I have at last found the dwelling of the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, and the Old-Woman-of-the-Wood shall not bar me from her. But first I shall rest awhile." So, weary from the long ride, he dismounted, and turning his horse to graze on the tall grass, he lay down and fell asleep.

Now that morning the Beautiful-of-the-Earth summoned the Mämädréqja, who came with her left arm wrapped in a bloody bandage, and she asked her, "What has injured thee?"

The Old-Woman-of-the-Wood replied, "The day before yesterday, when I would have cut me a staff in the forest, my knife slipped and slashed off my

hand. As it will be a month before it grows again, while I cannot protect thee go not outside the wall, lest harm come to thee."

The Beautiful-of-the-Earth went to sit on her balcony that overlooked the meadow where Handa lay asleep, and presently she said to the Mämädréqja, "I see a spot of white in the tall grass."

"It is only a white stone," the Old-Woman-of-the-Wood replied.

"Is there anything whiter than a white stone?" asked the Beautiful-of-the-Earth.

"Aye," grumbled the Mämädréqja, "the brow of a man I met in the forest."

Said the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, then, "I see spots of black above the white."

The old Witch Grandmother answered, "What should it be but the feathers of a dead crow?"

"Is there nothing blacker than a crow?"

"Aye," snapped the Mämädréqja, "the hair and eyebrows of the man I met in the forest."

After a while the Beautiful-of-the-Earth said, "I see two spots of red on the white stone."

"They are the crow's blood."

"Can there be anything redder than that?"

"Aye," snarled the Mämädréqja, grinding her

teeth, "the cheeks of the man I met—may evil tread in his footsteps!"

At that the Beautiful-of-the-Earth sighed, thinking, "How handsome that man must be! Would that I might see him!"

Now at that moment Handa woke and stretched himself, and the Beautiful-of-the-Earth exclaimed, "Why, it is a man, and yonder I see his horse grazing!"

The Old-Woman-of-the-Wood looked a single look, and saying to herself, "It is the man who twice has got the better of me! He knows not what fear is, and my eyes are frightened to see him here!" she locked the Beautiful-of-the-Earth in the palace's inner room. Then she took the form of a serving-maid, and going to the meadow, said to Handa, "Long life to thee, young sir! My mistress, whose door is open to all strangers, bids thee enter her palace that she may offer thee hospitality."

"Glory to thy mouth!" he replied. "I accept it."

So she hastened to open the gate, but seeing how her eyes glittered, he remembered the old man's warning. Cried he, "Trouble not thyself. I know a quicker way!" And leaping to his saddle, he spurred his horse straight at the high wall. Now the wall was

magicked so that whoever touched it was turned to stone, and though the horse leaped so valiantly that it cleared it, a single hair of its tail and the heel of Handa's boot brushed against its top, so that instantly, as they alighted in the garden within, both horse and rider became gray stone.

Now the garden was filled with the images of heroes who had thus been enchanted, but among them all none was so noble as Handa or sat his horse so gracefully, so that the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, as she walked there that evening, saw the new statue with admiration. She called the Mämädréqja and asked her, "Who is this? For I do not remember seeing him before."

The Old-Woman-of-the-Wood replied, "That is the man I told thee of that I saw in the forest!"

When she heard this the Beautiful-of-the-Earth secretly wept salt tears, thinking, "Alas that one so handsome should be made nothing but cold stone! Would that I knew the secret of the Mämädréqja's magic that I might cause him to live again!"

Thus it fared with Handa, who received his father's finger ring of kingship. Now must be told what befell his twin brother, Zjermi, who chose his father's silver sword.

Zjermi rode three days, he rode four days, and on

the fifth day, as he threaded a lonely ravine amid the mountains, he beheld a man's hand thrust up from a rubble of rock in the dry bed of a stream. Thought he, "It is a traveller who has been swept from his trail by a land-slip, and no doubt he is as dead as nails!" He unwound his girdle and looping it about a tree, let himself down, and when he had dragged away the boulders, found a lad of his own age, bleeding and with a broken leg but still breathing.

Zjermi carried him to the trail and stripped him to bind his wounds, when he saw growing in his armpits tiny wings like those of an eaglet. Wondering, he splinted the stranger's broken bone with strips of bark and rubbed him to consciousness, and making a camp, fell to nursing him and feeding him with wild game till he was able to walk, by which time they were the best of comrades.

When they said farewell to one another, the lad, whose name was Zef, said to him, "Glory to thy hands that have tended me! But for thee I would now be food for the wolves! Though we must part, let us become blood-brothers."

Zjermi replied, "Willingly." So each cut his finger and they mingled the blood and drank of it together.

Said Zef, then, "We are now brothers. If at any

time I can serve thee, thou hast only to call me and thou shalt have my aid, even at cost of my life."

"My thanks, Brother," answered Zjermi. "I say to thee the same. Would that our ways lay not wide apart, so that we might indeed summon one another."

Said Zef, "If thou hast ever need of me, kindle three fires two yards apart, and standing between them, call aloud three times, 'O Zef, son of Sheqir!' and before those fires are out I shall be with thee." So saying he strode away into the mountain.

Zjermi rode ten days, he rode twenty days, crossing mountains and valleys, till he came at length to a land shut in by snowy peaks. Through it ran a swift river on whose bank was its capital. He entered the city's gate and there was neither man, woman, nor child to be seen on its streets and Squares. The doors and windows of every house were shut, and from behind them came such sounds of weeping and wailing that his horse drooped its neck between its knees.

When he had ridden thus through the principal street without meeting so much as a beggar, Zjermi dismounted, and knocked at the door of an inn. It was opened by an aged man to whom he said, "Greetings to thee! I am a stranger who would remain awhile under thy roof." The man took his horse to the stable, and when he had brought him in and had set

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bread and wine before him, Zjermi asked him, "Why
is thy city so sad?"

The other replied, "We mourn because the Royal
Princess, Bardha-Kuqe, the White-Red One, the
daughter of our King, is to die to-morrow."

Asked Zjermi, "What is her illness?"

"Nay," said the old man, "she is in health. But the
lot has fallen upon her and she is to be given to the
Kuchedra."

"I have indeed heard of the Kuchedra," said
Zjermi, "though it is not known in mine own land. Is
thy city in the power of one of the loathsome crea-
tures?"

The other answered, "Aye. For more years than
can be counted it has had its lair in the gorge whence
our river flows. Each month a maiden, chosen by lot,
must be given it to devour, else it blocks the water,
so that the river dries up and the people perish from
thirst. A year ago I thus lost my only child, and this
month it is to be the Royal Princess."

"Of what nature is the Kuchedra?" asked Zjermi.

The old man replied, "It begins life as a small
worm in a dark cave or deep fissure in the earth.
Each fifty years, if it be not seen by mortal eye, it
changes to a more terrible shape, till at two hundred
years it becomes the Kuchedra. It is then of mon-

strous size, and so filled with poison that its very breath kills the high-flying birds and the yellow foam it spits strikes any living thing dead. Our Kuchedra is of the bulk of forty oxen, in form like a woman, gray as willow bark, with breasts that hang to its knees, and red hair that whips about it like snakes. It is older than the oldest cypress tree and more to be dreaded than an army of lions."

Now while they talked tumult rose in the street, and the old man said, "It is the hour when the Princess is to ride through the city, taking her farewell of the people."

So Zjermi went out with him, and they mingled with the crowd, and presently the palace gate opened and the Princess Bardha-Kuqe rode forth on a horse as white as milk. She rode up one street and down another, and wherever she went the people stood weeping salt tears. She was so lovely that she could not be described in a tale or written of in a song, and the instant his eyes beheld her Zjermi fell deeper than the deepest sea in love with her. At the thought that on the morrow she must become the prey of the Kuchedra he wept with the rest, and when she had ridden back into the palace he returned to the inn in such anguish that he scarce knew his hands from his feet.

There he asked the old man, "Has thy King no

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soldiers and this land no heroes who can overcome
the Kuchedra and put it to death?"

The other answered, "Swords and spears of steel
are powerless before its poisonous breath, and its lair
is sown with the white bones of brave men who have
gone against it. There is but one thing that can over-
come the Kuchedra, and that is the Dragúe."

Asked Zjermi, "What is a Dragúe?"

The old man replied, "It happens now and then
that among the ten thousand boy babes born each
year one will have little wings sprouting in its arm-
pits. This is the sign of a Dragúe. When the mother
beholds these wings on her new-born babe, she swad-
dles it instantly, taking all care that no one else shall
see it naked till it is old enough to know and guard its
secret. Otherwise it will die. Thus the saying is 'Only
God and the mother know the Dragúe.' "

When Zjermi heard this he said to himself, "May
my life be shortened if Zef, my blood-brother, is not a
Dragúe!" And he said to the other, "Tell me more."

Said the old man, "I can tell thee little else, save
that such a babe grows to be a man of great strength,
fearing nothing in the white world, and that from
twelve years old the Dragúe have the power to call
up thunder clouds at will and to fly naked through
the air more swiftly than the eagles. They are the

natural enemies of the Kuchedra, and when one of the creatures appears in a countryside where the Dragúe is known, they smell it out, and gather in numbers to assail it."

At these words Zjermi thought, "Did not Zef, when we parted, tell me how to summon him from afar? What if he could help me lift the curse from this city and save the Princess whom I so love?" Then he asked, "If weapons of steel are useless against the Kuchedra's poison, how can the Dragúe slay it?"

The old man replied, "There is a single charm against which the yellow foam the Kuchedra spits has no power, and that is a cradle. When he attacks it, therefore, the Dragúe carries in his hands a cradle. And he fights not with sword and spear, but with thunderbolts which he snatches from the clouds he has called up. When the Kuchedra is stunned by these, it may be slain with a silver sword. But, alas! I have known of no Dragúe in this land!"

When it was dark Zjermi went beyond the gate of the capital to a hidden spot, and kindling three fires two yards one from the other, took his stand in their midst and shouted three times, "O Zef, Son of She-qir!" after which he sat down and waited. And before the fires died he heard a rustling in the upper air and instantly Zef, his blood-brother, stood naked beside him.

Said Zef, "Long life to thee, my Brother! How can I aid thee?"

Then Zjermi told him his story, and said he, "O my Brother! If indeed thou art able, I beseech thy help to kill the Kuchedra, which otherwise will devour my love."

Zef replied, "Do I not owe thee my life? Thou wert right to summon me. As I passed through the air I scented the creature, which we Dragúe are bound to slay. But first I must gather such of my comrades as may be reached in time. Return to thy inn and wait this night in peace. To-morrow, when the Princess goes to the Kuchedra's lair, follow her and remain with her till the creature comes. Fear not but we Dragúe will be there, and I promise thee that thou shalt give it the death blow with thy silver sword." So saying, he sprang into the air and vanished.

Zjermi returned to the inn and spent the hours sharpening and polishing his sword, till the sun was high next day, when the old man came to him. Said he, "Sir, if thou art minded to see the last of our Princess, take thy stand at the city gate, for soon she will go forth to the Kuchedra." So, when he had eaten and drunk he mounted his horse and with his silver sword in his girdle, rode to the gate, where a vast crowd was gathered, weeping and wailing for

sorrow. Presently the royal procession came from the palace, and when the King and Queen for the last time had embraced the Princess, she set forth afoot to the gorge which was the Kuchedra's lair, while all the people stood watching with tears till she had passed from sight.

Then Zjermi dismounted, and saluting the King, said he, "O King's Majesty! I am a stranger, come only yesterday to thy capital. I have fallen in love with the Princess Bardha-Kuqe, to whom now I go. If I slay the Kuchedra and bring her back unharmed to thee, may I have her for my wife?"

Cried the King, "Lift this curse from the land and not only shalt thou marry her, but thou shalt be my well-loved son to inherit my kingship and rule after me! But how shouldst thou succeed where a hundred heroes have lost their lives?"

Said Zjermi, "Nevertheless, give me thy blessing."

Then the King and the Queen blessed him, praising his courage but without hope, and returned sorrowfully to the palace, while he rode after the Princess.

As for her, at the entrance to the dark gorge, from whence the river flowed, she sank down on the ground, weeping for her sad lot and in terror of what awaited her. When she saw Zjermi riding toward her, she cried in amazement, "O Brave Heart! What dost

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thou here? Think not to save me, which is impossible,
but fly for thy life!"

"Fear not for me, Most Beautiful!" he answered.
"I and my sword are here to protect thee!" So saying,
he dismounted and turning his horse to graze, sat
down beside her. "I love thee," he said. "Canst thou
love me in return?"

She replied, "Had thy love time to speak, mine
own would answer it. For thou art such a hero as I
have dreamed of. But I must die, and I would not
cause thy death also! I pray thee mount and return
to the city while there is yet time!"

Said he, "After I have slain the Kuchedra we shall
return together. But meanwhile I am weary and
would rest. When it appears, wake me." And so say-
ing he laid his head in her lap and instantly fell asleep.

Now as she sat watching his sleeping face, she felt
love for him overflow her heart. Said she to herself,
"I must die, indeed, but he shall not perish with me!"
And whistling his horse softly to her, she bound his
wrist to its bridle, thinking, "When the Kuchedra
comes, the horse will be beside itself with fright, and
will drag him to safety whether he will or no."

But as she bent over him, grieving, two tears fell
from her eyes upon his face, and he half-woke and
asked her, "What touched my face?"

She replied, "O my dear, it was but a raindrop."

So he slept again, and at last longing overcame her and she bent her head and kissed him on the mouth. At that he stirred and asked, "What touched my lips?"

"O my dearest," she answered, "it was only a falling leaf."

So once more he slept, and presently the water of the river turned yellow and rose in boiling waves, the trees began to moan, and forth from the gloomy gorge came the Kuchedra. It was as big as a barn, its upper portion formed like a woman, scaled and clawed, with breasts dangling like swinging baskets and a mouth spitting yellow foam; and its rear was that of an enormous lizard, with a tail set with teeth like the tusks of a wild boar. As it came forth, its red eyes glared like smoky lanterns, and it roared so heart-shaking a roar that the very ground trembled.

At the sound Zjermi woke, but the horse, trumpeting with fright, bounded away into the forest, dragging him with it, so that he could neither stop it nor draw his sword to slash through the bridle thong that bound his wrist. When at last he was able to check its flight and to free himself, he ran back, sword in hand, to the river, thinking to find the Princess in the claws of the terrible creature.

But lo, when he came there he beheld her still unharmed, lying where she had fainted on its bank. Before the gorge the Kuchedra reared, roaring, while above it hovered a blue-black thunder-cloud, come from nowhere. In and out of the cloud flew naked men, like the huge birds called Karrakush, who held in their left hands wooden cradles, and with their right hands snatched thunderbolts from its flashing heart and hurled them down upon the Kuchedra, which writhed in pain and fury.

In vain it spouted its poison foam which fell harmless from the cradle on which the Dragúe caught it. In vain it tried to regain its lair: while some of its assailants rolled great boulders to choke the mouth of the gorge, the rest redoubled their attacks till at last, after a long fight, the Kuchedra fell, stunned and bleeding from a hundred wounds.

Then every Dragúe flew down to the ground, and Zef, who led them, said to him, "O my Brother, take thy silver sword and thrust it to the heart. But hold my cradle before thee lest it still have enough strength to harm thee with its yellow foam."

So, holding the cradle, Zjermi went forward and thrust three thrusts. The first glanced from the Kuchedra's scales, the second rebounded, but the third, into which he put all his might, tore through its body.

and pierced its heart, from which a torrent of foul-smelling black blood poured into the river. And instantly the red glare faded in its smoky eyes and it lay dead. Said Zef, "Cut out the creature's tongue, for it is a charm which no magic in the white world can withstand." And Zjermi did so, coiling the severed tongue about his waist under his girdle.

Said Zef, then, "O my Brother, thou hast thy wish. The Kuchedra is dead, and thou hast gained the maiden of thy desire. All good and all happiness to thee!"

Zjermi replied, "And to thee also! If once I saved thy life, thou hast repaid the debt a hundred times, and a thousand times I thank thee."

Then they kissed each other, and Zef said to his Dragúe comrades, "Brothers, let us now return, each to his own place." And instantly they flew into the air and vanished.

Then Zjermi went to where the Princess Bardha-Kuqe lay, and kneeling beside her, fell to rubbing her feet till her eyelids fluttered, and he said to himself, "Glory to my hands! Presently she will speak."

It was at that very moment that his brother Handa, in the northern land to which he had journeyed, leaping his horse over the wall of the Palace of the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, had been turned to

stone by the magic of the Mämädreqja, and chancing to glance at the locket he wore about his neck Zjermi saw that its jewel had turned black. Said he to himself, "My brother Handa is in peril and I must go at once to rescue him! Yet how can I leave my love here in such plight?"

Now in that capital lived a worthless braggart, of great strength but little valor, named Barkulku. He had stolen secretly from the city, on Zjermi's trail, thinking to gain sight of the terrible Kuchedra without danger to himself. From a secret spot he had seen the battle, and now beholding the creature dead and Zjermi rubbing the Princess' feet, he came from his hiding place. Exclaimed he, "Health to thee, O Hero! Would I had come in time to help thee in this fight!"

Zjermi answered, "Thou canst aid me now, for I must depart without delay from this land. Wilt thou bear the Princess back to the King her father, and say that the curse of the Kuchedra is lifted from his capital and that I will return, so soon as may be, to claim her for my wife?"

Said Barkulku, "Willingly."

So Zjermi, though it tore his heart to leave her, mounting his horse, set off at a gallop on the trail by which he had come thither.

No sooner had he vanished than Bardha-Kuqe

opened her eyes, and seeing the Kuchedra lying dead, and Barkulku beside her, exclaimed, "Where is the man who saved me?"

Said he, "Who but myself has done so? As for the man of whom thou speakest, so soon as the Kuchedra appeared he fled in terror and the beast was about to devour thee when I sprang upon it and slew it."

When she heard this the Princess wept, crying, "I will not believe that he whom I so loved was a coward!"

But Barkulku cut off the Kuchedra's dreadful head with his dagger and put it on his shoulder, and betook himself, with her, to the capital, where the people raised shouts of rejoicing, and the King received him with all honor, and ordered that preparations be made for his marriage to Bardha-Kuqe.

She, however, took to her bed, neither eating nor drinking, nor left she off weeping till the royal physicians shook their heads over her and the King knew not what to do. Said she, then, to him, "O my father, press me not to wed this man now, but give me a month in which to recover my health." To this he agreed, and meanwhile he made the scoundrel Barkulku his royal guest in the palace and treated him with all favor as his son and heir to his kingship.

Now as for Zjermi, he went as far as he went, riding night and day till he came to the fork of the road where he had parted from his brother Handa. There



he took the northern trail, across mountains and valleys, and so at length reached the dark forest, on whose edge he came upon the old man cracking hazelnuts.

Said he, when Zjermi questioned him, "Aye, thou

art on the right trail. One with thy features, but with dark hair and eyes, entered this forest a month ago to find the Beautiful-of-the-Earth who has her palace in its center. No doubt he has fallen into the clutches of the Mämädréqja who guards her, and thou wilt never more see him in life. Nor shall I see thee again if thou art fool enough to follow him."

But Zjermi answered fiercely, "If the old Witch Grandmother has harmed him she shall suffer for it!"

Said the old man, "Thou mayest not, for thy life, enter the palace gateway or touch its wall, till the Mämädréqja has lifted the spell she has laid on them, and how canst thou compel her to do that?"

Now Zjermi remembered what Zef, his blood-brother, had told him of the power of the Kuchedra's tongue that was coiled about his waist, and he answered, "I carry that which no evil magic can withstand."

Said the old man, "Then thou art well armed, and good luck to thee! Remember that all things that live hereabout are her slaves and that she can assume any form she desires to deceive thee!"

Zjermi bade him farewell and rode into the forest. He rode two hours and three, and at length the Mämädréqja, prowling the wood, scented him. When she saw him she said to herself, "He has the very

features of the last one. They are twins and I shall take him as I took his brother."

So she assumed the form of the maiden in the brocade robe, and cried out to him, "O Sir, whoever thou art, help me in my distress."

When he saw her he thought, "She is not lovely enough to be the Beautiful-of-the-Earth. What if she should be the Old-Woman-of-the-Wood herself?" And he answered, "Long life to thee, maiden! What ill has caught thee?"

She replied, "I have walked over-much and weariness has overtaken me. I pray thee, take me up on thy horse and carry me to my palace, which is not far away, and thou shalt have my gratitude."

Said he, "Gladly!" and bending down, lifted her and set her before him on the saddle.

Now as he did so his girdle touched her side and she began to tremble exceedingly, so that he asked, "Art thou ill?"

"Nay," she answered, "but I have an injured hand and thy girdle chafes it. Take it off and throw it from thee, and thou shalt have a girdle of woven gold to take its place."

At that he knew her for the Mämädréqja. Said he, "Willingly," and began to unwind his girdle. But instead of dropping it on the ground he threw the end

of the Kuchedra's tongue about her waist and bound her to him so that she could not escape. And immediately her brocade robe turned to dirty leather and her maiden's form became that of the old Witch Grandmother, with a nose like a field sickle and her one remaining hand black and hairy and clawed like an eagle's.

Feeling herself thus trapped, she shrieked a terrible shriek and put forth all her strength, biting and scratching like a lynx, but her magic was powerless against the Kuchedra's tongue, and when he drew his dagger and set it against her scrawny throat, she ceased to struggle.

Said she, grinding her teeth, "Well, thou hast beaten me. What price must I pay for my life?"

He answered, "Thou shalt lift thy spell from the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, and releasing all in her palace from their enchantment, take thy wicked magic from this forest forever."

She was obliged to agree to this, and before he released her, he made her guide him to the palace, from which she lifted her spell, and all the statues in its garden—princes and heroes from many lands, above a hundred of them—came to life, his brother Handa among them. The twins embraced one another, after which Zjermi called the Beautiful-of-the-Earth, and

said he, "All of this company came hither to win thee to wife. Which of them dost thou desire?" Then she went to Handa and kissed him on the cheek, saying, "It is thee I love and no other."

Now the other princes said to Zjermi, "Thou who hast rescued us all shouldst be the one to have her." But he answered, "Nay, for I have fallen in love with a princess in a distant land. Having now found and freed my brother, I shall return to wed her and make that land my home forever."

Said they, then, "What can we do to show our gratitude?"

He answered, "Our father, King Sokol, was cheated of his throne by an enemy who seized the rule. If ye will, before ye return to your own countries, go with my brother and help him to take back his rightful place."

When the two brothers had wished one another long life and happiness, Handa set forth, with the Beautiful-of-the-Earth as his bride, leading the company of princes. When they reached the border of his land, King Sokol's enemy, who had seized the throne, ordered his army to oppose them, but half of the soldiers—who had loved King Sokol and hated the usurper—seeing the noble multitude who had come to right the wrong, threw down their arms and

would not fight. So that Handa's company, in a single charge, completely defeated them and slew the false King and seated Prince Handa on the throne, to the joy of the people.

As for Zjermi, when he had sought out the old man on the edge of the forest and wished him long life, he set out straightway for the land of the Princess Bardha-Kuqe. When he arrived at its capital lo, he found the city decorated with flags and flowers. He asked a bystander the cause of this, and the man answered, "Thou must, indeed, be a stranger. The city is in festival because our Princess, the White-Red One, this very hour is to wed the hero who a month ago saved her from the Kuchedra."

Asked he, "Who is this hero?"

The other replied, "His name is Barkulku, and our King will make him his son, to rule after him."

When he heard this, Zjermi guessed what had happened. Without waiting he spurred his horse to the palace, and riding straight over the guards who would have stopped him, with his silver sword in his hand strode into the room where the marriage crowns were about to be placed upon the heads of the bridal pair, and where at sight of him the Princess Bardha-Kuqe cried out from joy, while the brazen-faced Barkulku trembled like a whipped dog.

Said Zjermi, "I have come for my bride. How is it that I find her about to be wedded to another?"

Cried the King, "What! Darest thou say this, who didst fly in terror of the Kuchedra and leave my daughter to her fate?"

Answered Zjermi, "That I did not, though this liar would have had thee so believe."

Exclaimed the cowardly Barkulku, "It is he that is the liar. Did I not bring to thee the beast's head, that is still set on a spear point in the palace courtyard?"

Said Zjermi, "O King's Majesty, have the head brought before us, and I will prove to thee that I speak truly."

The King gave command to his guards and the Kuchedra's head was brought, when Zjermi said to Barkulku, "What is missing from it?"

He replied, "Nothing."

Said Zjermi to the guards, "Look in its mouth."

They did so, and said they, "Its tongue has been severed."

Then Zjermi took the tongue from under his girdle and threw it down before the King. "There, King's Majesty," he said, "is the creature's tongue, which I cut from it with my sword, before I gave the Princess to this villain's care to bear back to thee."

Then, seeing his lie exposed, at the terrible look the King cast upon him Barkulku threw himself at his feet praying for mercy. But the King bade his soldiers drag him to the courtyard and strike off his head and set it beside the Kuchedra's.

So this was straightway done and Zjermi wedded Bardha-Kuqe in a festival that lasted a whole month. They two lived in happiness to their last hour, and in time he ruled that land in the King's stead.

Up and down the staircase runs this tale.

Ducats on thy forehead! Go a smooth trail!

SOME OF THE WORDS IN THESE STORIES HOW TO SAY THEM AND WHAT THEY MEAN

Bardha-Kuqe (<i>Bar-da-Koo-k'ye</i>)	<i>"White-Red."</i> A woman's name
Barkulku (<i>Bark-ool-koo</i>)	<i>"Wolf-Belly."</i> A man's name
Beautiful-of-the-Earth	<i>The Albanian Sleeping-Beauty</i>
Beiram (<i>Bay-ram</i>)	<i>A supernatural donkey that guards buried treasure</i>
Bey (<i>Bay</i>)	<i>A hereditary land-owner</i>
Bôr (<i>Bore</i>)	<i>"Snow."</i> A woman's name
Bousouka (<i>Boo-soo-ka</i>)	<i>A lute</i>
Dervish (<i>Dur-vish</i>)	<i>A member of a Mahometan sect</i>
Dif	<i>A giant that eats human flesh</i>
Dragué (<i>Drag-oo-aye</i>)	<i>A flying-man</i>
Gheg (<i>Geg</i>)	<i>A native of northern Albania</i>
Gizari (<i>Ghi-zar-ee</i>)	<i>"Cheese-Eater."</i> The name of a nightingale of wonderful song
Gjelosh (<i>G'yay-lash</i>)	<i>A man's name</i>
Gjuro (<i>G'yu-ro</i>)	<i>A man's name</i>
Imer (<i>Ez-mer</i>)	<i>A man's name</i>
Jijapajumas (<i>Gee-ya-pa-yu-mas</i>)	<i>A kind of fairy</i>
Karrakush (<i>Kara-koosh</i>)	<i>A great bird. The Albanian counterpart of the Arabian Roc</i>
Kuchedra (<i>Koo-chay-dra</i>)	<i>A monstrous supernatural creature that haunts rivers</i>
Lubiya (<i>Loo-bee-ya</i>)	<i>A forest-ogress</i>
Lukja (<i>Look-ya</i>)	<i>A woman's name</i>
Mämädréqja (<i>Mama-dray-k'ya</i>)	<i>"Devil-mother."</i> The old grandmother of the witches
Marash (<i>Mare-ash</i>)	<i>A man's name</i>
Marko (<i>Mar-ko</i>)	<i>A man's name</i>
Mingo (<i>Ming-go</i>)	<i>The name of a horse</i>
Mira (<i>Mee-ra</i>)	<i>Female spirits who appear at a child's birth to decree its fate</i>

SOME OF THE WORDS IN THESE STORIES HOW TO SAY THEM AND WHAT THEY MEAN

Ndrek (N'drek)	<i>A man's name</i>
Noítéshe (No-ee-taysh-eh)	<i>The name of a dog</i>
Óra (Oh-ra)	<i>Friendly spirits of the air who can foresee and foretell one's future</i>
Palok (Pal-lok)	<i>A man's name</i>
Pjeter (P'yay-ter)	<i>A man's name</i>
Qerím (K'ye-reem)	<i>A man's name</i>
Qyrumbéti (K'yü-rüm-bay-tee)	<i>A man's name</i>
Rasím (Ras-eem)	<i>A man's name</i>
Rexh (Rej)	<i>A man's name</i>
Scutari (Scoot-a-ree)	<i>A city in northern Albania</i>
Sheqir (Shek-ear)	<i>A man's name</i>
Shtoyzavállè (Shtoy-za-vahl-leh)	<i>Invisible spirits of the air, once Angels but now forbidden to enter Paradise</i>
Shtríga (Shree-ga)	<i>A witch living in the underworld</i>
Sokol (So-kol)	<i>A man's name</i>
Tinglimajmun (Ting-lee-my- moon)	<i>"Jingle-Monkey." A fanciful place of wonders</i>
Thopch	<i>A friendly dwarf living in the underworld</i>
Toshk	<i>A native of southern Albania</i>
Visojidha (Vis-oy-ee-da)	<i>A man's name</i>
Zjermi (Zee-ere-mee)	<i>A man's name</i>

